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THE
HILLYARS AND THE BURTONS :

A STORY OF TWO FAMILIES.

VOL. II.



THE
HILLYARS AND THE BURTONS:

A STORY OF TWO FAMILIES.

BY HENRY KINGSLEY,
AUTHOR OF "AUSTIN ELLIOT," "RAVENSHOE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE HILLYARS AND THE BURTONS:

A STORY OF TWO FAMILIES.

CHAPTER I.

JAMES BURTON'S STORY : THE GHOST SHOWS A LIGHT FOR
THE FIRST TIME.

THE night we went to the play, it was arranged that Joe, because of his lameness, should start first ; and I was to stay behind, to finish some work. It therefore happened that I found myself hurrying through the small streets beyond Westminster Bridge, alone.

I am going to relate a distressing accident, very shortly, for the simple reason that, if I had not witnessed it, I should have missed making a singular discovery and meeting with a few singular adventures.

I noticed a young man, of my own rank and age, riding a cart-horse just in front of me, and took but little notice of him ; not dreaming how very important his every

look would be, in a very few minutes. I remembered after, that he seemed a merry, good-humoured fellow, and was whistling. The night was frosty, and the road was slippery; his horse blundered and stumbled, and threw him, whistling as he was, under the wheels of a passing waggon. The next moment I was carrying him on to a doorstep, quite dead; shattered beyond recognition.

I cannot tell you what a lamentable affair it was. I did what I could—I helped others, and was beginning to congratulate myself upon my self-possession, when I found that a very singular effect was produced on myself. I was giving my name and address to a policeman, when I felt something coming too quickly to be stopped, and directly after, burst into a wild tempest of tears—such a tempest that I could not stay the course of it for a time, but had to give it way, gust after gust, until they grew fainter, and died away into an occasional stormy sob. Then I went on to the theatre, thinking, poor fool as I was, that I might forget the real terrible tragedy I had just witnessed by throwing myself headlong into a sea of fantastic balderdash.

I found Joe, and, when the door was opened, we fought our way into a good place. The instant we got settled, Joe asked me what was the matter, and I told him that I had seen a fellow run over. He said, "Poor

chap !” but, not having seen it happen, thought no more about it, but settled himself down to enjoy his evening.

I suppose there are some play-goers still alive who remember the “Harvest Home.” It belongs to the Eocene, or at latest to the early Miocene, formation of plays—probably, to be correct, it is halfway between the “Stranger” and the “Colleen Bawn.” There was a dawning of the “sensation” style in it, but nothing very tremendous. O. Smith shot the first comedy gentleman stone-dead (as you were supposed to suppose, if you hadn’t known better all the time) from behind a stone wall, with an air-gun ; and the first lady threw herself on the corpse, and was dragged off screaming, in a snow-storm, by Mr. O. Smith, her putative papa. Whereupon, Mr. Wright came on, as a Cockney sportsman dressed like a Highlander, having lost his way, and, as far as I can remember, found the body. In the end, Mr. O. Smith was hung, or, on the principle, says Joe, of “Nec coram populo,” was led off cursing and kicking ; and Mr. Wright was married (or was going to be) to the second lady.

That was the sort of stuff that Joe and I used to laugh and cry over in those days. We had seen the play acted at the Adelphi, and were most anxious to compare the magnificent Milesian Irish pronunciation of our own Miss Brady, with the broken English of Madame Celeste. It all fell dead on me that night. Even poor

old Wright, with his bare legs and his impudent chatter, could not make me laugh. The image of what I had carried up and set on the door-step, an hour before, would not leave me. That a merry, harmless lad like that should be struck down in an instant, seemed to me so lamentable and cruel. I could think of nothing else. The details would come before me so persistently—the head that *would* hang ; the two low, fallen women, who kept saying, “Poor dear ! poor dear lad !” and all the rest of it. The play seemed such a hideous silly mockery after what had happened that I could bear no more of it. I made some excuse to Joe, and I went out.

The squalor and noise of the street suited my mood better than the gaudy brightness of the play-house : and the bustling reality of the crowd soothed me for a time, and made me forget the tragedy of the evening. This crowd of noisy, swarming, ill-fed, ill-taught, ill-housed poor folks was, after all, composed of my own people—of men, women, and lads of my own rank in life ; of people whose language was my own, whose every want and care I was acquainted with ; of the people among whom I had been bred up, and whom I had learnt to love. I was at home among them.

The other day, after spending years in a higher and purer atmosphere, I went among them again, just to see whether they were the same to me as in old times. I

found that I was quite unchanged. They did not disgust me in the least. I felt, when I got among them again, that I was at home once more. I was pleased to find that I had not developed into a snob ; but I was sorry to find that they distrusted me, in my good clothes, and would have none of me. Knowing them as I did, and knowing how they talked among themselves, I could see that they talked in a different language in the presence of my fine clothes and watch-chain. It is very hard for a gentleman to know them ; very nearly impossible. They never speak to him quite naturally. They never speak to a gentleman without a tale in their mouths. Who should know better than I who write ? *

I went into a public-house, where I heard music, and got myself some porter, and sat down on a bench among some young men, who made room for me. The musicians played some dance-music—a waltz which I now know to be one of Strauss's ; but it sounded to me like the lapping of the tide upon the mud-banks, and the moaning of the wind from the river among the grave-stones in the old churchyard.

So, thought-driven, with a despondency on me for which it was difficult to account, I was compelled homewards. From street to street, all low and dull, to the bridge, where the chill, frosty wind rustled among

* In earnest.

the scaffolding of the new Houses of Parliament with ghostly sighs. And so I passed westward, through another labyrinth of squalid streets ; some bright with flaming gas and swarming with noisy crowds ; some dark and dull, with only a few figures here and there, some of which lurked away before the heavy tramp of the policeman.

As I passed the vast dark façade of Chelsea Hospital, the clock struck ten, and a few minutes afterwards I came on the broad desolate river, at the east end of Cheyne Walk. The frosty wind was moaning among the trees, and the desolate wild river was lapping and swirling against the heads of the barges and among the guard piles, which stood like sentries far out, stemming the ebbing tide. Of all scenes of desolation which I ever witnessed, give me the Thames at night. I hurried on again, with the strange terrified humour on me stronger than ever.

There was a ball at a large bow-windowed house, close to Don Saltero's, and I stopped to listen to the music. There were some fiddles and a piano, played evidently by skilled professional hands. Good heavens ! could they play nothing but the wild waltz of Strauss's, which I had heard the Germans playing in the public-house ? Why should handsome young gentlemen and beautiful girls dance to a tune which sweeps in such

strange, melancholy eddies of sound, that even now it sets me thinking of winds wandering over solitary moonless seas, which break with a far-heard moan, against distant capes, in an unknown land at midnight?

A couple came from the rest and stood in the window together, behind the half-drawn curtains: and I could see them, for their heads were against the light. He was a gallant youth, with a square head; and she seemed beautiful too. He spoke eagerly to her, but she never looked towards him; he seemed to speak more eagerly yet, and tried to take her hand; but she withdrew it, and he slowly left her and went back into the room; but she remained, and I saw her pulling the flowers from her nosegay and petulantly throwing them on the carpet, while she looked out steadily across the wild sweeping river, hurrying to the sea.

So on I went again, passing swiftly through the churchyard. In a few moments after, I had turned out of Church Street into our own row. It was quite quiet. Our great house rose like a black wall in front of me; I cast my eye up it until it rested on the great dormer-window of Reuben's room—the ghost's room—and, good heavens! there was a light there.

It was gone while I looked at it; but there was no doubt about it. Either Reuben had come home, or else it was the ghost. I went in at once. My father was

sitting alone in the kitchen, with his head in his hands. I looked up at a certain hook over the dresser. The key of Reuben's room was hanging there still.

My father looked up. "Jim, my old chap," he said, "I'm so glad you're come. Get my pipe, and come and sit alongside. How did you like the theayter, old man?"

As I looked at my father, I saw that something was the matter. I had never seen the dear, noble face in sorrow before ; but my love told me at once that sorrow had come. I waited for him to tell me what it was, I had perfect confidence in him. I said : (in the old style, for though I had been trying hard to talk like Joe and Erne, I had hitherto made a mess of it, and always resorted to the vernacular in emergencies, or for business purposes), "I didn't care about the play to-night. I saw a young chap run over, and that upset me for the evening. I wasn't going to spoil Joe's fun ; so I came home" ("took and hooked it" in the original). "Reuben is not come back, is he?"

"No," said my father ; "he ain't come back. What should he come back for? There's his key a-hanging over the dresser. I say, old man, Mr. Compton's been here."

"Has anything gone wrong about the patent?" I asked, aghast.

"Not *gone*, old man, but very likely to go, I'm afeard."

"How is that?" I asked.

"The invention was anticipated, Mr. Compton is afraid. There was a patent taken out for it before, and Mr. Compton is afraid that Marks and Cohen have bought the patentee's interest in it; in which case, my chance ain't worth a brass farden."

"And what then?" I asked.

"Why, I'm ruined, old boy, body and bones. The savings of twenty happy years gone in a day. And worse than that—nigh a couple of hundred more, as far as I can make out. I wouldn't have cared—I wouldn't have cared," said my father, hurling his pipe fiercely into the fireplace; "I tell you, Jim, I wouldn't have cared—" he said once more, with a heave of his great chest and a sob. That was all he said, but I understood him.

I rose to the situation. One of the proudest recollections of my most prosperous and lucky career is the way I rose to the situation that unhappy night. I put my arm on his shoulder, and drew his grizzled head to me, and said :

"Wouldn't have cared—if it hadn't been for what, father?"

"I wouldn't have cared," said my father, "if the disgrace had fallen on me alone."

"Has any one been a-talking about disgrace?" I asked.

"Not yet," said my father.

"They'd better not," I answered. "Let 'em come to me and talk about disgrace. I'll disgrace 'em. And ruin—who talks of ruin? How can the best smith in England be ruined; they can't take his trade from him, can they? Let's up with everything, and go to Australey."

"What?" said my father, looking up.

"Go to Australey," said I, as bold as brass; "the country as Master Erne's brother came from. Why, a smith is a gentleman there. He's—"

"Go to bed, old chap," said my father.

"Bed or no bed," I said, "is neither the one thing nor the other. According as a chap thinks, so will he speak; that is, if he acts according, which is reason. My sentiments being asked, I gives 'em free; and there you are, and welcome, with many more, and thank you kindly; and may the Lord forgive us all our transgressions." (All this was said with defiant assertion; for I saw that, by the mere mention of the word Australia, I had brought a light in my father's face which was not there before. In my nervous eagerness to drive the nail home, I made the above little speech, which might have been intended to mean something then, but the key to which is missing now.)

"Take and go to bed, I tell you," said my father again; "you and your Australeys! I'm ashamed on you."

"Shame took and whispered in his ear," I answered, seeing I was somehow doing the right thing, and casting the Pilgrim's Progress at him, "And Old Adam and Little Faith tried to stop his going on too; whereas I speaks out, and ain't for stopping nobody."

My father, possibly concluding that the more I spoke the more I should involve myself, reiterated :

"Go to bed, I tell you, old chap; who knows but what you're talking sense? I don't say neither the one thing nor the other; all I say is, go to bed."

And so I went: to bed, and to sleep. And, after some unknown time of unconsciousness, I awoke with a ghastly horror upon me.

Joe was by my side, but I did not wake him. I was very careful not to do that, and there were one or two reasons for it.

First of all, I thought of the poor lad I had seen run over that evening—that pale face, those teeth, and those spasmodically winking eye-lids; and, while he was still in my arms, I seemed to come round the corner once more, into the buildings, and saw the ghost's light gleam out of Reuben's window. And then Reuben was come home, and in trouble up there. And then it was Reuben who had been run over; and then Reuben had to sit up there all alone, poor lad, watching the body; but, however the phantasmagoria

shifted themselves, the crowning horror of all was in the room upstairs, where I had seen the light. And in the sheer desperation of terror I rose to go there, refusing to awaken Joe, because I even then, light-headed as I was, remembered that Reuben would not have him know anything.

And so, in a state of cowardly horror at I knew not what—a state of mind which was nearly allied to the most desperate courage—I arose silently, and, in my trousers and shirt only, passed out of our room on to the great empty staircase, determined to go up all through the desolate empty house, until I found the mystery which I knew was hid aloft in the ghostly attic. I would penetrate into the mystery of that strange light, even though I died of terror.

The old staircase creaked under my weight, and the web-winged things which flutter about ceilings of these old places dashed round aloft in silent wheeling flight. The ghosts all passed on before me in a body; and I was glad of it, for I was afraid that some of them might stand politely aside in a corner to let me pass, and I don't think I could have stood that. Yet all the ghosts passed on, except a solitary one, who followed stealthily.

This following ghost was the most terrible ghost of all, for I couldn't see what it was going to be at. I

thought at one time that I would stop and see whether it would stop too ; but then again, I reflected, what a terrible thing it would be if it *didn't*, but came right on.

Once in my terror I thought of crying for help, and raising the neighbourhood ; but while I was thinking of it I passed a staircase-window, and saw that I was already high above the neighbours' highest chimneys, and that I might shout long enough. There was no retreat now without passing by the ghost which was following ; and every step I took I felt a growing dislike to do that—without the kitchen poker.

For it, was a clumsy ghost, and knew its business imperfectly. No properly educated ghost would knock a hard metallic substance against the banisters, and then use a most low and vulgar expletive immediately afterwards. I was getting wonderfully uneasy about this ghost. The kitchen-poker was such a handy little poker, but here was I and there was the poker, and so there was nothing to do but to go on.

At last I reached Reuben's room-door, and got hold of the handle. The door was unlocked ; and I threw it open—and saw nothing but black darkness.

I held my breath, and *felt* that some one was there. Dreading the man who was behind me, I desperately sprang forward towards the well-known fire-place to get

hold of *Reuben's* poker, if I should have the luck. Then a lanthorn was turned full blaze on my face. I sprang towards it, with the intention of getting hold of the man who held it, putting it out, getting possession of it and pounding everything human I met with black and blue ; on the old cockney rule that "a solitary man is worth a dozen in the dark, because he can hit everybody, and everybody else is afraid of hitting one another ;" but, before I could reach him, I had a cloth thrown over my head, an arm round my throat, tightening every moment ; and in less than a minute was completely overpowered, with my arms tied behind me, blindfolded, with a handkerchief passed through my mouth, and tied behind ; having seen no one.

I felt that I was in the light, and that people were looking at me ; at last some one spoke, in a very gentlemanly, refined voice I thought, and said, "Who the deuce is it ?"

"It's the young smith ; it's that gallows young Burton," said another voice I knew too terribly well. It was the voice of the man I have called Bill Sykes.

Another voice said, "Let us beat the dog's brains out, and cut his body into small pieces and burn it. Curse him ; prying into three gentlemen's private affairs like this. Let me have his blood, Bill. Let me have hold of him."

I knew this voice well enough. It was Mr. Pistol's. I wasn't much afraid of *him*. It was Sykes I was afraid of, the man who had me by the collar; the more so, because I saw, by poor Pistol's asking to get hold of me, that he wanted to get me out of Sykes's hands; and the more so still, because I knew that Pistol, in his terror of Sykes, would let *anything* happen. Therefore, when Sykes said to Pistol, "Stand back and lock the door," and when I felt his hand tighten on my collar, I began to say the Lord's Prayer as fast as ever I could.

Pistol only said, "Bill, hold hard;" but his feeble protest was drowned in the strangest sound I ever heard. The unknown man with the gentlemanly voice broke out with a fierce, snapping, snarling objurgation, which took myself and another listener utterly by surprise.

"Sykes, you blood-thirsty, clumsy hound, drop that life-preserver or you are a dead man. It is only by the cowardly idiocy of that fellow Pistol there that you are in this thing at all, you low brute—the best thing you were ever in in your life, worth five hundred of your stupid burglaries. Leave that boy alone, you worthless dog."

I felt Sykes's hand relax, but the bully did not yield.

"You showing fight, you sneaking, long-nosed cur! Shut up, or I'll pound you into a jelly."

"Will you?" said the gentlemanly man, almost in a scream of rage. "Me! you dog. Me! with this knife in my hand. You ignorant idiot, with your clumsy cudgels. Learn the use of this, and then you'll be my equal; just as sure as you know that I'm your master. You'd better go and tickle a black snake on the nose in December, than come near me with this in my hand. Leave that lad alone. I won't have a hair of his head touched."

The bully knew the fearful advantage which the use of the knife gives, too well; he came down a little. He said only :

· "What for?"

"Because I choose it. How could such as you understand if I told you why?" said the gentlemanly man, with a fiercer snarl than ever. "I am a rogue of long standing, but I have seen better things, you Sykes. I hate you and your class. Hell has begun with me in this world, with all its torment and its loathing; and the most terrible part of my torment is, that those I loved faithfully have cast me off, and that I have to herd with such hounds as you. But I will be revenged on one, until I bring him to reason; and, while I carry a knife, I will express my loathing and scorn for

such curs as you. Come hither, lad. Do you care for your cousin Reuben?"

As he said this he moved the handkerchief from my mouth, and I answered, "Yes, I cared very much for my cousin."

"We are a parcel of thieves and worse, my lad, who have got possession of the room he rents. He knows us, my boy, and has been seen in our company. If you say one word about to-night's work, your cousin Reuben will be transported as an accomplice of ours. So you see how fatal the consequences of your speaking would be. We shall be gone to-morrow, may be. You'd best say nothing, for your cousin's sake."

I said that I would not say one word.

"If you do," said Pistol, "I'll have your bingy; strike me as blind as a morepork if I don't have your bingy!" (by which speech I know, through the light of later experience, that Mr. Pistol had been transported).

"Shut up, fool," said the gentlemanly man. "Sykes, I am going to let this young 'un go."

"I'll cut his throat if he blows," said blustering Bill. "*He knows me.* He knows he'll never be safe if he does. Swear him. Do you wish you may die if you peach, you cursed young toad?"

"You clumsy fool," said the gentlemanly man; "put him on his honour, I tell you. You'll have his monkey

up directly. You're not going to say a word, for your cousin's sake ; are you, Jimi ?"

I repeated that I would not say one single word.

"Then come outside here," said the gentlemanly man. And so he led me to the door, pulled the cloth from my eyes, shut me out on the landing, and locked the door after. When I found myself free on the landing, I am pleased to remember that the first thing I did was to offer up a short thanksgiving: that it was only the grace after meat which I repeated in my haste is no matter—the intention was the same.

Now the steed was stolen I shut the stable-door, and went down stairs with the most elaborate caution, in anticipation of another ambushade. I was a long time in reaching my bedroom. At last I reached it. One of the pleasantest moments in my life was when I slipped into bed, and heard my father and mother snoring in the next room, producing between them such a perfect imitation of a rusty mine-pump, as would have made their fortunes on the "boards."

One comfort was that Joe had not missed me. He was lying just as I left him. He had evidently been fast asleep all the time.

Had he ? The moment I was comfortably settled he spoke. He said, "It was touch and go for that devil Sykes, old Jim."

"What do you mean, Joe?" I asked, in my astonishment.

"Mean!" said Joe, laughing; "why, that I was standing in the dark behind him with our bedroom poker, and if he had raised his hand six inches higher, I'd have had him down like a dead dog, and Pistol after him. He'd have gone down at once, if I hadn't seen the knife in the other one's hand. When *he* turned up trumps, I let things be."

"Then it was *you* who followed me upstairs?"

"So it was, Jim. I've had my suspicions about that room; and, when you began to cry out in your sleep about Reuben watching corpses up there, and when you got out and went up, I followed you. I thought you were sleep-walking, and so didn't dare to wake you. I've followed you into many fights, my old boy, and I wasn't going to let you go up *there* alone."

"I think you would follow me to death, Joe."

"I think I would," he said. "They had nothing but one dark lanthorn, or I should have had to play the dickens. I wonder what they are doing there? I think they are only hiding. We must speak to Rube, poor lad. It is very hard on him. Poor faithful, affectionate fellow! I wish he had more determination; I wish he could say No. But what can he do?"

"I'll tell you what," I said. "I have a suspicion.

I believe that the man who came to my assistance with his knife was the same man I saw in Lawrence Street, that I told you of, when Rube was among the whole gang."

Joe rose up in bed, and said, in accents of profound astonishment, "Why, do you mean to say you don't see how things stand?"

I said, "No; but that long-nosed fellow seemed to have some kind of influence with Rube."

"Do you mean to say," said Joe, "that you haven't made out this much: That hook-nose man is Reuben's father, our cousin, Samuel Burton, come home from his transportation, having followed, as I strongly suspect, Mr. George Hillyar? Didn't you make *that* out?"

I was too much dumbfounded to speak.

"You old stupid, *I* thought you had made it all out, and would not speak even to me, Reuben having distrusted me. I have watched the man days and days, till I made it out. Don't you see how doubly it tongues you and me, the only two who know it?"

I did see that, certainly. But at this moment my father dreamt of the devil, and had to be punched awake by my mother, lest he should pass into that fourth and dangerous state of mesmeric coma, as did the young lady spoken of by that acute scientific reasoner, Dr. G——. In which case, as every one ought to know, it would have become necessary to mesmerise some one

else, nineteen to the dozen, to fetch him back again, before he got into the fifth state, which is the deuce and all. At all events, my father awoke, and accused my mother on the spot of having had the nightmare, in consequence of having taken too much vinegar with her trotters at supper: which was all she got for her pains. But, he being awake, Joe and I talked no more.

CHAPTER II.

AFFAIRS AT STANLAKE.

GERTY didn't like England; she couldn't possibly conceive why the people in England didn't all go and live in Australia. James wanted to get as many of them as would come, over to Cooksland free of expense, and when they came they always liked it—in the end, you would understand her to mean; for at first they felt strange, and were, Lord bless you, more particular over their rations than any corn-stalk cockatoo who might have treed his section on the burst, and come back to the shed: or than any real stringy bark hand ever thought of being. She didn't see why they should not all move over together. It wouldn't do to leave the Queen behind; but she might get to think better of it as soon as she saw how much superior Australia was to England. And so she used to twitter on to old Sir George Hillyar, never allowing for the fact that, when most confidential and affectionate with him, she was apt

(as above) to ramble off into fields* of utterly incomprehensible slang, and to leave his close-cropped grey hair standing on end with amazement.

Gerty didn't like Stanlake. "Not very much, papa," she would say to Sir George, taking his hand in hers; "you ain't offended, are you? because I mustn't offend you, or else James will be angry with me when I go back home, and say it is all my fault. I love you, but I don't like Stanlake. George knows you are going to leave it to him, because Mr. Compton advised him to cut down the east belt. But I don't like it. It's so cold to your bones."

"What do you like, my dear little white rosebud?" Sir George said one day, laughing.

"Why," she answered, "let me see. I like you (very much indeed—you don't know how much); and I like George more than you; and I like Erne more than you, but not so much as George. And I like Reuben the waterman, and his cousin the blacksmith, Jim—I mean, you know, Erne's friend—the tall lad with the large brown eyes, who sat under the tomb that first Sunday, when the pew-opener poked the umbrella into her husband's eye, because the mad woman caught spiders in her prayers (you didn't hear of that, though). I like him, and I like his great big sister; for, although her hands are very red, she has a gentle face, and her voice

is like James's when he is playing with baby. I like all these ; so I can't be so hard to please as you want to make out, you cruel tyrant."

"I don't mean what people do you like," said Sir George, gently, "for I believe you love everyone you come near, just as everyone loves you. I mean, what do you like to do best? What can I do to amuse you, to make the time go less slowly?"

"I like the fire best," said Gerty. "I like to sit before the fire, and look at the coals."

"Why?"

"It warms my poor bones," said Gerty. "And I see things there."

"Tell me what, Gerty—tell me what. Do you ever see a little white sea-swallow that has winged its way, such a weary way, over the heaving sea to sing to an old man and soften his heart?"

"No," said Gerty, simply, "I don't ever remember to have seen that. I see black fellows, and ships, and balls, and things of that kind. I saw the quartz range beyond Neville's Gap once yesterday, where we go to get flowers. My word, what a rage poor mamma was in!"

"About what?" asked Sir George, much amused. "About the ships, or the black fellows?"

"About my book-muslin frock, you foolish thing, and

my complexion; there wasn't a bit of it as big as your hand that wasn't torn. And there *were* black fellows in this story, too—for, when I found I was bushed, I had to go and look after them to take me home; and I followed the cattle-tracks till I came to the great Billebong where they were fishing, and I made them up stick and take me home. Lord! you should have seen me coming in state over the paddock with my hair down, and five-and-forty black fellows, lubras, picanninies and all, at my heels. You would have laughed."

"I think I should," said Sir George.

"Mamma didn't," said Gerty. "I was as brown as you; and that book-muslin cost a deal of money. She made such a fuss about it before the black fellows, that they went back and tracked me to the Grevillea Scrub, to get the shreds of it which were left on the thorns, thinking they were some priceless tissue. They kept bringing pieces of it as long as your little finger, or smaller, to my mother ever so long, and wanting her to give them brandy and tobacco for them. She *was* angry."

"She must have had good cause, with six daughters like you to take care of."

"Yes. You see she had staked her reputation that we should marry better than the seven Brown girls. And what with poor papa going off at the Prince of

Wales, with the gout getting into his stomach, and tallow down to three-pence, and all the hands on the burst at once, it was enough to make her anxious, wasn't it?"

"*I* should think so," Sir George would reply. And then she would go chirrapping on again; and George would sit watching them from behind his book.

There was no doubt whatever that silly Gerty was making extraordinary way with the old man. Her amazing beauty, her gentleness, and her simplicity won the old man completely; while her piquant conversation as above (it was piquant enough from her mouth; though it may be dull from this pen), amused him immensely. Whenever she was utterly, unintelligibly, colonial in her language, Sir George would make her explain herself, and this would cause her to use other colonialisms worse than the first, to his intense delight. She was winning on the old man day by day, and George saw it with hope.

The old man would sit hours with her now. They neither bored the other. Gerty loved talking, and he loved listening to her strange prattle. Sir George grew sensibly more free with and kind to his son; and the odd eight thousand a-year—which Secretary Oxton had encouraged George to go to London and seek—seemed nearer to realization day by day. Old Compton, the

lawyer, used to come often, as his wont was ; and, as he saw Sir George and Gerty together so much, he took the trouble to watch them, and as he watched them he said, " A new will!—a new will! My young friend Erne will not be so rich as I thought."

George watched them too, with hope—hope sometimes alternated with despair. Sir George would be sitting beside Gerty absorbed in a kind of pitying admiration of her for an hour or more, when in would come Erne, who loved his sister-in-law, and loved to hear her talk in her strange *naïve* way, and would stand against his father's chair on the other side. And then George would see the old man's right hand withdrawn from the arm of Gerty's chair, and his left go wandering up to smooth down the clustering brown curls, which hung on Erne's head like a garland.

Then George would set his teeth, and curse Erne silently in his heart, for his hatred of him grew stronger day by day. He *knew* that Erne was utterly simple and undesigning ; that he loved Gerty—nay, that he loved *him*, George himself ; but he would not know it. He fed his heart in secret denunciations of his brother. He let the devil in ; and, to himself and in private, he cursed his brother for a designing young villain, knowing that he was lying all the time. The story of Cain and Abel is a very old one. Where were James and Aggy now ?

People called on Gerty. The Nalders called ; but Gerty was looking out of window, and saw them as they drove up, and wasn't at home. She would die sooner than be at home when that artful bold Yankee woman had the audacity to call and hunt up her husband—much sooner die, for then they would be sorry for her, and would not despise her. She had *some* spirit left, she thanked Heaven, though the cold *had* got into her bones. Nevertheless, she looked from behind the curtain as they drove away, and saw that Mrs. Nalder had been dressed by a Frenchwoman, and looked horridly handsome and amiable ; and that Nalder had mounted a tall white hat on to his honest head, and wore what he would have called a white vest and black pants, although it was only half-past two in the afternoon.

Then, another time, some other horrid people called. She couldn't see who they were, but was sure they were horrid, and she wasn't at home. But she heard a loud voice in the hall say, "Sure then, Phayley, we'll wait in the parlour till she come ;" and then, with a little cry of joy, she ran out of the drawing-room, and the next moment she had buried her lovely head in the capacious bosom of Miss Lesbia Burke.

The good Irishwoman half laughed and half cried over her ; at one time holding her at arm's length to get a good look at her, and the next hugging her again, like

a dear old lunatic as she was; while Mr. Phelim O'Brien (the leader of the Opposition, James Oxton's deadly enemy) stood looking on, with a smile of infinite contentment on his handsome face. It appeared that he and his cousin, Miss Burke, were to be in London for some time on "bhisnuss," and they could meet again often. Lesbia brought all kinds of tender loves from half the colony; and, more, it was this battered old Irishwoman who had gone out of her way to Neville's Gap, that she might visit the quartz ranges, and bring Gerty a great nosegay of wild-flowers; and here they were in a band-box, triumphantly. They were all withered and dead—no more like their former selves, than was Lesbia Burke to the beauty of thirty years before; but some of the aromatic ones kept their scent still—the dear old bush scent—speaking of peaceful sunny summer days among the hot silent forests: and Lesbia's heart was as true and as loving now as it was when she learnt her first prayer at her mother's knee.

Gerty did not chirrup much to Sir George that night, but sat back in her easy chair, with the faded flowers on her lap, tying them up into various bunches like a child, and sometimes untying them and altering them. Once she looked up and asked him whether he did not wonder why she was doing this, and he said "Yes."

"I am calling up the different holidays I have had,

and am making up a bouquet for each one, of the flowers I remember best on those days, in order that you and George may put them in my coffin. I should like this bunch of silver wattle to lie on my heart, because they grow thick in the paddocks at Barker's Station, where George came and made love to me."

"You must not talk about coffins, my love," said Sir George. "Try cradles, hey? that is more to the purpose."

"It may be either," said Gerty, rising wearily. "I think I will go to bed. I think you had better send for Aggy; she is at the Bend. She will be here in an hour. I wish you could send for her."

Then the poor little woman looked wildly round the room and saw where she was; and, as she realized the fact that her sister was sixteen thousand miles away, she gave a weary little moan, which went to Sir George's heart.

"She is too far to send for, my love," he said, kindly. "I wish she were here."

"Stay," said Gerty. "Tell me, dear old papa, was Lesbia Burke here to-day, or am I dreaming again? I know she was. These are the flowers she brought me. George! George! send for old Lesbia!"

Lesbia Burke was sent for, and we need not insult your judgment by telling you that she came raging off

instantly to the assistance of the sweet little bush flower. She was naturally a loud woman, and was rather louder than usual on her journey in consequence of her impatience. But the moment she entered Stanlake doors, she, with the wonderful adaptive power of her nation, became transformed into a calm, dexterous, matronly lady, with a commanding power expressed in every word and attitude. She took possession of the house and ruled it. Sir George Hillyar had an eye for female beauty, but he told George that he had never seen anything like Lesbia Burke's poses before. When she swept into the library, at two o'clock in the morning, with the lighted candle close against her stern-marked face, and announced the event to them, both of them started. "The Siddons, as Lady Macbeth, would have hidden her head," said Sir George. She certainly was a terribly beautiful woman.

It was she who put the baby into bed with Gerty when the doctor gave leave; and who, when she heard Gerty's strange little croon of delighted wonder, fell on the astonished doctor and baronet's neck, and called him an "ould darlin'."

"Good heavens!" said Sir Ergot Savine; "I hope no one saw her. What would Lady Savine say? You never know what these Irish people will be at next."

CHAPTER III.

JAMES BURTON'S STORY : THE BEGINNING OF THE BAD
TIMES.

"THE Simultaneity of certain Crises in Human Thought ; more especially relating to the Results of Investigation into Mechanical Agencies," would form a capital title for a book, as yet to be written. As good a title as could be found (if you don't mind a little American, and follow Sir Walter Scott's dictum about the title of books), because no one could by any possibility gather from it what the deuce the book was about, until they had read it.

The writer of this book would have to take notice that, for the last hundred years (say), intelligence has been so rapidly circulated, that the foremost thinkers in all civilized countries are at work for the same end at one and the same time. He would have to point out as examples (I merely sketch his work out for him) the simultaneous invention of steamboats on the Clyde and

in New York ; the nearly simultaneous invention of the Electric Telegraph in England and in America (though Cook and Wheatstone were clicking messages to Camden Town three months before the Yankees got to work). Again, for instance, the discovery of the planet Neptune by Adams and Leverrier ; and last, not least, the synchronic invention of the centrifugal bucket-lifter for emptying cesspools—claims for which were sent in at the same time by Ebenezer Armstrong, of Salford, and by James Burton, of Church Place, Chelsea.

What actually ruined us was, that none of us would go near the machine after it was made, and that it had to be worked by third parties. In his enthusiasm for science, I believe that my father would have gone and superintended, but his proposition was met by flat rebellion of the whole family. My father demanded whether or no he was master in his own house ; whereto Emma, who had a vast deal of spirit at times, replied promptly, "No, don't let him think so. Nothing of the kind." Emma's having turned Turk startled my father, and caused him to reconsider the matter of his being master in his own house in another, and, let us hope, a better spirit ; for he only sat down and troubled me for his pipe. When he had nearly smoked it, he caught my eye, and said, "There was three or four keys wanted driving home, old chap ; and a washer or two on the

upper spindle would have broke no one's bones. Nevertheless, let be ; she is right in general. It'll all be the same one day."

That night in the dark, Joe, who was at home, turned towards me and said :

"Jim, Erne Hillyar is making fine gentlemen and ladies of us. We oughtn't to have stopped his going to see the machine at work. I ought to have gone, and you ought to have gone also. We are getting too fine, Jim ; it won't do."

I quite agreed, now I had time to think, and we determined to go the very next night.

But the very next day came Erne, looking so wonderfully handsome and so exquisitely clean, that going to Augusta Court to superintend the emptying of a cess-pool became absolutely impossible. Certainly, what Joe said was true ; Erne was making fine gentlemen of us.

That night the gentlemen who had charge of the machine came home and reported it broken. It had to be repaired. To satisfy curiosity, it ~~was~~ what gold-miners call a California pump (which is an old Chinese invention), but with hollow paddles, nearly like buckets. We had not got it repaired for three weeks, and, by the time we got it to work again, Armstrong had sent in his claim, and we had the satisfaction of knowing that the delay was entirely our own fault.

Strange to say, the invention had been registered some years, though, from want of practical knowledge, the machine had never been used. The former patentee instituted legal proceedings against my father and Armstrong. Cohen and Marks, the solicitors, bought up Armstrong, and we were nearly ruined.

So ends the history of my father's inventions. The other day my mother asked him whether he couldn't contrive a spring to prevent the front door slamming. He declined pointedly, saying that he had had enough of that in his life, and that she ought to be ashamed of herself for talking about such things.

Nearly ruined. All my father's savings, all Joe's little earnings, and most of the furniture, just saved us. We could keep the house over our heads, for we had taken it by the year, and my father and I had our trade and our strength between us and ruin still. And as is very often the case, troubles did not come singly. There was another forge established at the bottom of Church Street, and our business grew a little slack (for new brooms sweep clean). We knew that a reaction in our favour would set in soon; but, meanwhile, our capital was gone, and we had to depend on our ready-money receipts for the men's wages.

Those men's wages were a terrible trouble. I have had a peaceful, prosperous life, and have been far better

used than I deserve ; for the trouble about these men's wages is the worst trouble, save the great disaster of my life, which I have ever known. I had always been a great favourite with them, and used to skylark and chaff with them ; but that soon was altered when the curse of poverty came upon us. I was so terribly afraid of offending them. Their wages must be paid on Saturday, or they would go to the other forge. *We* had often to give trust, but we could never take trust from them. They had each eighteen shillings a week—two pounds fourteen ; and one week we only took three pounds seven in cash. There was not a stick of furniture, or a watch, or a spoon left which could go.

Then began the time of short meals. There were no more "jints" now. The "kag-mag and skewer-pieces," &c. contemptuously mentioned by my father to Mr. Compton, were now luxuries—luxuries which were not indulged in every day by any means. The first necessity was bread and butter for the "kids," as our merry Reuben, absent through all of it, used to call them ; the supply of that article and of milk-and-water was kept up to the last.

If the contemplation of a family who triumphantly come out strong, in the middle of a complication of troubles and difficulties, is pleasing to any of my readers, I should like him to have seen the Burton

family in *their* troubles. It would have done his honest heart good to have seen the way in which we came out, when we hadn't really, for three weeks, enough, or near enough, to eat.

My mother took to singing about her work. She couldn't sing a bit. She never could and never will; but she took to it for all that. Some people take to playing the flute who can't play it at all, and therefore there is no reason why my mother shouldn't take to singing. At all events, she did, with an ostentatious light-heartedness which we could all see through. It would have been better if she had known any tune, but she didn't, and so we had to do without. Her singing, however, was better than some very fine singing indeed, for it produced the effect intended; it showed us all that she was determined to act as pitch-pipe in the family choir.

And we took up the harmony with a will, I warrant you. We had always been an easy-going, gentle sort of family; but now our benevolence began to take an active form to one another, which was painful then, and is painful now when I look back on it. Our love for one another had before this run on in a gentle, even stream; now it had got on the rapids and become passionate; for the same unwhispered terror was in all our hearts—the terror lest, in the troubles and evils


which were coming thick upon us, we might break up the old family bond and learn to care for one another less—the ghastly doubt as to whether or no, our love would stand the test of poverty.

Would it have outlived a year's disgraceful weary want, or would it not? That is a terrible question. Our troubles came so hard and fast, that *that* test was never applied to us. The only effect our troubles had on us was to knit us the closer together; to turn what had been mere ox-like contentment in one another's society into a heroic devotion—a devotion which would have defied death. And the one person who led us through our troubles—the one person who gave the key-note to our family symphony, and prevented one jarring note from being heard—the person who turned out to be most cheerful, most patient, most gentle, most shifty, and most wise of all of us—was no other than my awkward, tall, hard-featured, square-headed, stupid old mother.

Fools would have called her a fool. I think that, in the times of our prosperity, we older children had got a dim notion into our heads that mother was not quite so wise as we were. Three weeks of misfortune cured us of that opinion, for ever and ever. That she was the most affectionate and big-hearted of women we had always known; but we never knew what a won-

derful head she had till this time. When that great and somewhat sluggish brain got roused into activity by misfortune, we were almost awed by her calm, gentle wisdom. When better times came again, that brain grew sluggish once more; my mother's eyes assumed their old calm, dreamy look, and she again became capable of rambling in her line of argument, and of being puzzled on such subjects as potatoes. But we never forgot, as a revelation, the shrewd, calm woman who had appeared to us in our time of trouble; had advised, and managed, and suggested, and softened affairs, till one was ashamed of being discontented. We never forgot what my mother could be, when she was wanted.

Yesterday I was sitting at her feet, watching the sun blaze himself to death behind the crags of Nicnicabarlah. My youngest boy had played himself to sleep upon her knee, and the light of the dying day smote upon her magnificent face as I turned and looked up into it. And then I saw the old, old look there—the look of perfect, peaceful, happy goodness—and I blessed God that there were such people in the world; and then in my memory I carried that dear calm face back through all the turbulent old times at Chelsea, and I pondered there at her knee, until the darkness of the summer night had settled down on the peaceful Australian forest.




I have often spoken of my gentle sister Emma hitherto. I have represented her to you as a kind, sensible, handsome girl, with an opinion of her own, which opinion was generally correct, and which also was pretty sure to be given—in short, an intensely loving and loveable, but rather uninteresting person—a girl, I should have said, with every good quality except energy. I should have said, up to this time, that it would have been difficult to make Emma take a sudden resolution, and act on it with persistency and courage. She was, as *I* should have said, too yielding, and too easily persuaded, ever to have made a heroine, in spite of her energetically-given opinions on all subjects.

Whether I was right or not, I cannot say; for she *may* have lacked energy hitherto: but she did not now. When my mother showed that remarkable temporary development of character which followed on her being thoroughly aroused to the change in our position, Emma looked on her once or twice with affectionate awe, and then took up the burden of my mother's song, and sung it busily and clearly through the live-long day. She sang the same old song as my mother did, though in clearer tones—a song of ten thousand words set to a hundred tunes. She sang of cheerful devoted love; the notes of which, though vibrating in

a Chelsea fog, made the air clearer than the sky of Naples.

I saw the change in her quickly. There was no abrupt statement of opinions now. She set herself to follow my mother's example quietly and humbly. Once, after looking at my mother, she came and kissed me, and said, "Who would have thought her so noble?" From that time she became my heroine.

Erne came to see us just as usual; and until long after it was all over, he never found out that anything was wrong. Our intense pride made us cunning. We were always exactly as we were in old times, whenever he called. My mother and Emma never sang in that ostentatious way when he was there, and all violent demonstrations of affection towards one another were dropped. He was perfectly unacquainted with our terrible strait all through; but we knew that one word to him would have ended our troubles at once. We knew that fifty pounds would have tided us over the evil time, and that fifty pounds was to be had by asking; but we couldn't ask from *him*. More, we must not let him guess that we were in difficulties, lest he should offer, and we should have peremptorily, and without the help of ordinary tact (for we were low-bred people), to refuse his offer.




If you ask, Were there any further motives which caused us to be so cautious in keeping our difficulties from Erne? I answer, they are simply these:—My father and mother, who did not know of Erne's love for Emma, were too proud and high-minded to take advantage of him. Joe and I, who had become aware of that attachment, would have thought that we were selling our sister; and, as for Emma—why, I should not have liked to be the man who would have proposed such a thing to her. I would sooner have gone alone into Augusta Court or Danvers Street after dark, fifty times over, than have faced the tornado of passionate scorn which would have broken over any one's head who proposed to her to trade on Erne's love for her. And, moreover, although I had never seen Emma in a moment of terrible emergency, yet I knew, by a kind of instinct, that Emma's dove-like head; which we had only seen as yet turned from side to side in gentle complacency, or at most raised calmly in remonstrance; was, nevertheless, capable of towering up into an attitude of scornful defiance; and that that gentle loving voice, in which we had heard no shrill note as yet, was capable of other tones—of tones as clear, as fierce, and as decided, as those of any scolding Peregrine.

This bitter trial of ours—(for three weeks, we elders

were more than half starved, if you will excuse my mentioning it; and we pawned, to use my mother's forcible English, every stick of furniture and every rag of clothes that could be spared)—had a great effect on Emma. She never was dictatorial after this. Before this, she was as perfect as need be, but unluckily she thought so, and required sometimes what I, in my low vulgar way, would have called "shutting up." But, after my mother utterly astounded us all, by behaving as she did—taking the helm, playing first fiddle in the family quire, and drawing the family coach clear off the lee shore of despair (Harry says that there is a confusion of metaphor here, but Harry is a fool)—after those times, she was not only humbler in her suggestions, but developed a busy energy quite unlike the steady, peaceful diligence of the old easy-going times. When, shortly after this, in an emergency, she displayed courage and determination of the highest order, I was not in the least surprised.

How my father and I worked all this time! Real work was, alas! very slack, but we made work—made things on speculation—things which never were asked for, and which never were worth the coals they cost. My father, a perfect Quentin Matsys, set to work on a small wrought-iron gate, from designs furnished by Joe, which, if completed, was to make his fortune. It was



never finished ; but I have it now, and a beautiful piece of work it is.

Erne brought us news from Reuben. He was going on just the same, and seemed as great a favourite as ever with Sir George, and, what seemed still stranger, with young Mr. George. Erne always lowered his voice now when he spoke of his brother. There was no doubt, he said, that George regarded him with deep jealousy and dislike. "He is afraid," said Erne, "of my coming between my father and him. I *never* do that. When he and my father are together I am seldom there, and when present silent. The only time I get with my father is when he and my brother's wife are together. I always join these two, and we three are very happy together."

And during all this time, in the midst of short commons, anxiety, and hard work, I had on my mind the terrible guilty secret of that dreadful room upstairs, and of what I had seen there. I was as silent as death on the subject. I had had no opportunity of communicating with Reuben since the night of my adventure ; and the one small piece of comfort in the whole matter was, that Reuben was still away at Stanlake, and would, in all probability, follow the family in the summer. Therefore, whatever happened, he must be held to be innocent.

Meanwhile, I had not even Joe to consult with ; for, a few days after our adventure in Reuben's room, he met with a singular piece of good fortune, which seemed likely to affect materially his prospects in life.

CHAPTER IV.

JAMES BURTON'S STORY : IN WHICH TWO GREAT PIECES
OF GOOD FORTUNE BEFALL US — ONE VISIBLE, THE
OTHER INVISIBLE.

SIR GEORGE HILLYAR, I found out afterwards, had sat in Parliament twice in his life, on the Tory interest. If there had been any interest more re-actionary than the Tory interest, he would have connected himself with it instantly. He had utterly outnewcastled Newcastle ever since he married his keeper's daughter : since he had brought a plebian Lady Hillyar into the house, it became necessary for the family respectability to assert itself in some other direction, and it asserted itself in the direction of Toryism. Sir George, with the assistance of a few others, got up a little Tory Revival ; and they had so edified and improved one another—so encouraged one another to tread in new and higher fields of Toryism—as to be looked on with respectful admiration by the rest of the party. And

among this small knot of men who claimed, as it were, a superior sanctity, Sir George Hillyar had the first place conceded to him, as the most shining light of them all.

At this time—at the time of our troubles—a general election was approaching, and Sir George Hillyar, at the solicitation of a powerful body of men, determined to enter public life for the third time, and contest, when the time should come, the borough of Malton.

We heard this news from Mr. Compton, and were wondering, why he had come to tell us about it, when he struck us all of a heap by announcing a most remarkable piece of good fortune. Sir George had offered Joe the post of private secretary, with a salary of two hundred a-year.

“And what do you think of that?” said Mr. Compton, triumphantly, to Joe.

Joe was trying to express his astonishment and delight, when he fairly burst into tears; and I don’t think any of us were very far behind him. We had always known that Sir George meant to provide for Joe, but we never expected such an offer as this to come at such a time.

“And what do you think of that? Is the salary enough?”

“Lord bless you, sir,” said Joe; “never mind the

salary. I'd go barefoot in such a place as that. There is no telling how I may end."

"Indeed, you are right," said Mr. Compton; "and you thoroughly deserve your good fortune. Sir George has employed me for a long time to make inquiries about your capacity and steadiness, and you have enabled me to make such a report of you as has secured you this offer. I wish you every success."

So Joe departed, dressed like a gentleman, "burning high with hope." The family troubles were to come to an end in no time now. All the morning before he went he was restlessly and eagerly, with flushed face, laying out his plans for our future benefit; and Emma either was, or pretended to be, as enthusiastic and hopeful as he was; and encouraged, nay, even surpassed, his boldest flights of fancy, until, by her arts, she had got Joe to believe that all which had to be done was already done; and to forget, for a time at least, that he was leaving us behind in poverty, and wearing anxiety.

Delighted as we were with his good fortune, we sadly felt the loss of one familiar face at such a time as that. But soon we had other things to think of, for our troubles came faster and faster.

On the Saturday night after Joe had gone, I noticed that our three men were unusually boisterous. Jack

Martin, the head man, brother of Mrs. Avery, struck me as meaning mischief of some kind, and I watched him carefully. He hurried his work in a somewhat offensive manner, struck with unnecessary vigour, upset the tools and swore at them,—did everything in fact that he ought not to do, except lame any of the horses ; with *them* he was still the splendid workman that my father had made him. But in whatever he did, all the fore part of the afternoon, the other two followed suit, though with smaller cards. They did not speak to my father or me, but they told one another stories, which were received with ostentatious laughter ; and Martin seemed inclined to bully my fellow-apprentice, Tom Williams. My father and I knew what they were going to do ; they were going to strike, and make it easier by quarrelling with us.

They had not much chance of doing that. I was very angry, but I imitated my father as well as I could ; and he, that afternoon, was more courteous, more patient, and more gentle than ever. About three o'clock my father was called out on business, and they, to my great delight, began quarrelling among themselves. How little I thought what that quarrel would lead to !

The moment my father's back was turned Jack Martin began on Tom Williams, the apprentice, again. At first he confined himself to impertinences, and kept address-

ing him as Werk'us (he was a parish boy, which made my father very jealous about having him ill-used or insulted, as Jack Martin well knew); but after a'time, finding that Tom was as gentle and as patient as ever, he began to take further liberties, and dropped two or three things on his toes, and once threw a shoe at him. Meanwhile I would have died sooner than interfere on behalf of Tom, though I could have stopped Jack Martin at once.

Now the third and youngest of our men, who had been with us about a year, was a young Cornishman, Trevittick by name: a very taciturn, almost sulky fellow, who had resisted all our efforts to be intimate with him, but who had in his silent, sulky way conceived a great regard, certainly never exhibited in public, for Tom Williams, the apprentice. After he had been with us about a month he had obtained my father's consent to Tom's sharing his lodgings, at his, Trevittick's expense. Shortly afterwards I made the surprising discovery that he and Tom used to sit up half the night reading mechanics and geology, and that Tom was bound to the very strictest secrecy on the subject. To this man Trevittick, therefore, whose personal appearance was that of a very strong Jew prize-fighter, with frizzly purple hair, I, on this occasion, left the defence of Tom Williams, with the most perfect confidence.

Trevittick was at this time the most absolutely silent man I ever met in my life. Consequently, when Jack Martin had, for a pretended fault, taken Tom Williams by the hair of his head and shaken him, and Trevittick had said, in a short, sharp growl, "Leave that boy alone, you coward," Jack Martin stood aghast, and asked him what he said.

"You heerd what I said well enough. Do it."

Martin was very much surprised, and made no answer for an instant; but the word "yield" (or more correctly the expression "shut up") and Jack Martin were utter strangers; so he walked up to Tom Williams, collared him, and shook him again.

"Drop that boy now, Jack, or I'll make 'ee," growled Trevittick once more, in a rather deeper tone.

After this, according to the laws of London honour, there remained nothing but for Jack Martin to call on Trevittick to "come outside;" which corresponds to the "after school" or "the old place" of your early days, my dear sir. But Jack had not time to say the words, when my father—who had been waiting outside, talking to a man on business—thought fit to come in, and to say in a very gentle, polite voice,

"Mates! mates! if you'll be so good as to work in my time, and to quarrel arterwards in your own, I shall be obliged."

So they set to work again, I all the time, like a low-lifed boy as I was, thinking what a splendid fight there would be in Battersea fields the next morning ; for there were certainly not a dozen men in the prize-ring who could have stood long before either Jack Martin or Trevittick.

But at six o'clock, although there was still work enough to keep my father and Tom Williams and me hard at it till two o'clock on Sunday morning, my father said it was time to knock off, and took out the men's money. Jack Martin was paid first, and he, I knew, would be spokesman. When he got his money he spit on it, and then jingled it in his closed hands.

"Come, Mr. Burton," he said, in a tone of injured innocence. "Why they're a-giving of a pound down at Jumston's. That's what Jumston's a-doing on. A-giving of a pound."

"And I think, Jack, as Mr. Jumston's giving two shillings too much. Why, that six shillings as you men are asking for, is six shillings off the kids' victuals. Six bob's worth of bread and butter, as I'm a true man."

Jack Martin began to talk himself into a passion, while my father raised himself on to the forge, and sat comfortably on the edge of the cinders.

"Well, then, I'll tell you where it is," said Jack Martin, "me and my mates must look to ourselves.

White men, leave alone Druids and Foresters, is not slaves nor negro Bones. Nor are they going to be, Mr. Burton; thank you for your kind intentions all the same. Come, sack us, will you? Take and give the sack to the whole three on us. Come."

"I don't want to give you the sack, Jack Martin," said my father. "I'm a ruined man, as you know But I won't rob the kids."

"Then this is where it is," said the other, who had now got himself into as towering a passion as he could have wished; "the master as won't give the pound when asked, nor the sack when challenged, is no master for me or my mates."

"Well, you needn't get in a wax over it, old chap," said my father. "If you like to stay for eighteen bob, stay. I don't want you to go."

"Not if we know it, thank you," said Jack, louder than ever. "We must look to ourselves. If you won't give us the sack, why, then we'll take it. Now!"

"I've been a good and kind master to you, Jack. I've teach'd you your trade. And now, when things look a little black, you want to leave me. And you're not contented with leaving, but you are so ashamed of your meanness that you puts yourself into a passion, and irritates and insults me. Now it runs to this, Jack. You're a younger man than me: but if you hollers like

that, in this here shop, I'll be blowed if I don't see whether I can't put you out of it. You'd better go."

Jack was so astonished at such a speech as this coming from the pacific James Burton, that he departed wondering and rather ashamed. My father paid the other man, and he went, and then he turned to Trevittick, who was sitting on the anvil, and offered him his money.

"Never mind me, master," growled Trevittick, speaking now for the first time; "*I ain't a-going to leave you. I was going this morning, but I've thought better of it. Never mind thikky money neither. I've a-got to fight to Jack Martin to-morrow morning, and I should be knocking that down, and a deal more too. You'm best owe me my wages a few weeks. I've saved lots, ain't I, Tom?*"

But Tom Williams had disappeared. And looking at my father I saw that he had coloured scarlet up to the roots of his hair, but was quite silent. After a time he managed to say to Trevittick, "Thank ye, lad—thank'ee, kindly." That was all he said, and all that Trevittick wanted him to say.

Trevittick went out without another word; but in about half-an-hour he came back with Tom Williams, and silently set to work. When my father got behind him he began telegraphing to Tom Williams, and Tom

replied by nodding his head nearly off, and smiling. Then the next time my father got near Tom he patted him on the back; by which things I knew that Tom had contrived to stop the fight, and that we should never know whether the Cornishman or the Londoner was the best man. Was I a little disappointed? Well, I am afraid I *was* a little disappointed. It was so very long ago, you must remember, and I did not write "Honourable" before my name at that time. But strict truth compels me to state that I *was* a little disappointed; I was indeed.

Meanwhile we three set to work, and worked far into the night: none of us any more conscious of the astounding piece of good fortune which had befallen us than was Fred, asleep on Emma's shoulder, with his balmy breath upon her cheek.

CHAPTER V.

GEORGE BEGINS TO TAKE A NEW INTEREST IN
REUBEN.

THERE was no doubt at all that what Erne had said was true. So anxious was he not to come between his brother and his father, that he never interrupted them in a *tête-à-tête*; nay more, seldom saw much of his father except in the presence of George's wife, Gerty. These three, however, were very much together, and enjoyed one another's company immensely.

George was furious at this arrangement; he had set Gerty on his father expressly to see what she could do. She was making immense progress with the old man, when Erne stepped in, as it seemed to him, and interfered. He attributed Erne's eager pleasure in the society of his sister-in-law to the very deepest *finesse*. In his generous conduct he chose to see nothing but the lowest and meanest cunning.

'Look at him,' he would growl to himself behind

his book ; "look at the artful cub, with his great eyes, and his gentle voice. Who would think he was such a young sneak? practising off his arts against those of my—Oh! my trebly-dyed fool of a wife. If she had had an ounce of brains, we might have had that will altered long ago. If I could only get her to quarrel with Erne! But she won't, and I daren't scold her, for fear she should show signs of it before her father. Oh! if she only knew what I was saying to her under my breath sometimes!—if she only knew that!"

George could hate pretty well, and now he got to hate Erne most decidedly. Poor fellow! he still loved his wife to some extent, but she made him terribly mad with her silliness sometimes. It was well for Gerty that she was under the protection of Sir George Hillyar. James Oxtan would have trembled had he seen the expression of George's face now at times. The long-continued anxiety about his succession in his father's will was wearing him into a state of nervous excitement. He, at this time, took up with one of his old habits again. He used to go to London and play heavily.

Reuben had stayed about Stanlake so long that it was just as well, said Sir George, that he should stay on until they went to the Thames in the summer. Although he was only hired by the month, yet every one

about the place would have been universally surprised if anything had occurred to terminate his engagement. He was considered now to be a sort of servant to Erne, who seemed much attached to him ; but every one knew that it was by the wish of Sir George himself that Reuben was retained there. Also it is singular, that the well-trained servants found out that Reuben was to be called Reuben, and that the name of Burton was not to be used at all ; and when Joe made his appearance as secretary, they were instructed to address him as Mr. Joseph. Some of the older servants, who remembered Samuel, knew well enough why ; and wondered to themselves whether or no he knew who Reuben was.

It was not very long after the arrival of the George Hillyars, that George, walking through the grounds, by the edge of the lake, near the boat-house, came across Reuben ; who, with his boat-mending instinct, acting under the impression that he must do something, was scraping a fir sapling with a spoke-shave, trying to make a punt-pole of it : which is what no one, who cares for a ducking, ever did yet. He was also singing to himself a song very popular at that time among the London youth, which may be advantageously sung to the tune of "Sitch 'a getting up stairs ;" if you can only get the words, which I fear are lost for ever.

Reuben had his back to George, and George heard him sing, with the most determined cockney accent—

“The very next morning he was seen,
In a jacket and breeches of velveteen.
To Bagnigge Wells then in a bran
New gownd she went with this 'ere dog's meat man.
She had shrimps and ale with the dog's meat man,
And she walked arm and arm with the dog's meat man,
And the coves all said, what around did stan',
That he were a werry nobby dog's meat man.
Oh he were such a handsome dog's meat man,
Such a sinivating titivating dog's meat man.”

George Hillyar called out, “Hallo, you fellow!”

And Reuben, not seeing who it was, replied, “Hallo; you fellow! it is.” And then he turned round, and, seeing who it was, was shent, and thought he was going to catch it.

“I ask your pardon, sir,” he said; “I thought you was the turncock come for the income-tax. There,” he added, with one of his irresistible laughs, “don't be angry, your honour. I can't help talking nonsense at times, if I was hung for it.”

“Are you the young waterman that my father has taken such a fancy to?”

Reuben sheepishly said he supposed he was.

“I shouldn't advise you to treat him to many such songs as you were singing just now. You should ~~try to~~ drop all this blackguardism if you mean to get on with him.”

“Lord bless you, sir,” said Reuben, “you'd never

make nothink of me. I've been among the coal barges too long, I have."

"I've seen many a swell made out of rougher stuff than you ; you might make rather a fine bird in other feathers. How old are you ?"

"Twenty, sir."

"Has he given you any education ?"

"Has who, sir ?"

"Sir George, of course."

"No, sir," said Reuben, in wonder.

"What a shame," thought George to himself. "I wonder what he is going to do for him. There is one thing," he went on thinking, and looking at Reuben with a smile ; "there is no mistake about the likeness : I shall make friends with the son of the bondwoman. I wonder who the dickens *she* was. I like this fellow's looks, much."

"Who is your friend ?" he asked aloud, pointing to a young man who had just come up, and was waiting respectfully a little way off.

"That is my cousin James, sir."

James Burton, who has told some three quarters of the story hitherto, here approached. He was a tall, good-looking lad of about eighteen, with an amiable round face, and yet one which gave you the idea that he was neither deficient in brains nor determination.

He approached George with confidence, though with great respect, and waited for him to speak.

"So you are Erne's friend the blacksmith, hey?" said George.

James said "Yes."

"And how does your pretty sister do, eh, lad? I am very anxious to see this pretty flame of Erne's. If she is as pretty as Erne says she is, the young rogue must have an eye for beauty."

James blushed very much, and looked very awkward, at this free and easy way of implying an engagement between Erne and Emma. He said nothing, however, and immediately George turned away from him and began talking once more to Reuben.

This was their first interview, and very soon Reuben had won over George Hillyar as he had won his father. Another noticeable fact is that the old man perceived George's growing liking for Reuben, and seemed pleased at it. George had nothing to complain of in his father's treatment of him. So George was very kind indeed.

If Erne could have been got out of the way, George thought, every thing must go right.

He had been home about six months, when one morning he would go rabbit-shooting, and so he sent for old Morton, the head keeper, and they went out alone together.

It was a glorious May day, a day on which existence was a pleasure. And they left the moist valley and the thick dark woods far behind them, and climbed up the steep slope of the chalk down, to shoot among the flowering broom, which feathered the very loftiest summit. They stood up there, with the county at their feet like a map, and the happy May wind singing among the grass and the junipers around them.

Poor George felt quieter up here with his old friend. He had been to London the night before, playing, and losing heavily, and he had been more than usually irritated with Erne that morning. Instead of setting to work shooting, he sat down beside old Morton on the grass, and, taking off his hat, let the fresh wind blow his hair about.

"Morton, old fellow," he began, "I wish I hadn't got such a cursed temper. You mayn't think it, but I very often wish I was a better fellow."

"You are good enough for me, Master George," said the old man. "You were always my favourite."

"I know it," said George. "That is very queer. Did you think of me all the time I was away?"

"I always thought of my own plucky lad that I taught to shoot. I thought of you constant through all that weary time. But it's come to an end now. You sowed your wild oats, it's true."

"But I haven't reaped them," said George, with his head on his hands.

The old man took no notice of this; he went on: "And here you are home again, with the most beautiful of all the Lady Hillyars, since there were a Lady Hillyar. And Sir George coming round so beautiful, and all—"

"But I am disinherited," said George; "disinherited in favour of Erne."

"Not disinherited, sir. I know more than that."

"Next thing to it," said poor George. "I know as much as that."

"There's time enough to alter all that; and mark my word, Master George, I know Sir George better than any man living, and I can take liberties with him that you durstn't—bah! that Master Erne durstn't. And I tell you that sweet little lady of yours has wound herself round his heart, in a way you little think. I held you on my knee when you were a little one, and I dare say anything to you. I hearn you cursing on her to yourself for a fool, the other day. Now you leave her alone. Fool she may be, but she will do the work if it is to be done. I hearn 'em together, Sir George and her, the other day, and I says to myself, 'Either you are the silliest little hare of a thing as ever ran, or else you are the artfullest little—'. There, I

forget. You let her alone. If it is to be done, she'll do it."

"No, she won't, old fellow," said George. "There's Erne in the way. There's Erne, I tell you, man. He never leaves them alone together. He is always thrusting his cursed beautiful head in between them, and ruining every thing. (Here he gave way, and used language about Erne which I decline to write, though there was not a single oath, or a single improper expression in it). Why, I tell you, Morton, that fellow's beauty, and amiability, and affectionate gentleness, and all that sort of thing, as nearly won me as possible. At one time I was saying to myself, 'If my father denies me justice, I shall be able to get it from him;' and so I thought, until I saw that all this amiability and gentleness was merely the art of a beautiful devil. When I saw him declining to do battle with me, like a man, and saw him sneak in between my wife and my father, then I said to myself—then I said to myself—Oh, stop me, old Morton, and don't let me talk myself mad. I want to be better. I swear to God I want to be better. But I am sinking into hell, and there is no one to save me. Where's James Oxtan? Why was he fool enough to let me leave him? And Aggy; how these shallow-brained women delude us, with their mincing airs of wisdom! See what they have brought me to now."

Perhaps, if the poor fellow had chosen to make friends in his own rank in life, he might have found one honest, educated man, who would have set everything right for him ; at all events have shown him that his suspicions of Erne were incorrect, and have made the ordinary routine of life, in his own rank, more pleasant to him. But he had, through vanity and idleness, early in life acquired the taste for being the greatest man in the company ; and the only company where he was king was the company of his inferiors, and the passion stuck to him, and so there he was, at the turning point of his life, telling his troubles to a foolish old gamekeeper.

The old man said nothing to turn away George's wrath from Erne. Why should he ? George had always been his favourite, and he believed what he said about Erne. No ; he only tried to soothe the poor fellow with commonplaces, and let him sit with his head in his hands until the wild fit had passed over. Then old Morton was glad to hear him change the conversation.

“What do you think of that young Reuben ?” asked George.

“Reuben,” said the old man, laughing ; “why, every one is fond of Reuben. A merry, cheeky young dog.”

“I have taken a great fancy to the fellow myself. I have a very great mind to take him for my servant.”

"I daresay he would make a good one, master," said Morton. "But I should have thought you had had one too many of that name. His father wasn't so satisfactory an investment as might be, and—"

"His father," said George, looking quickly round. "Are you mad?"

"Do you mean to say," said the other eagerly, "that you don't know that this Reuben's name is Burton, and that he is the son of your old servant Samuel, by—you know who?"

George started up, and stood looking at Morton, silent and deadly pale, with his hands clasped wildly in his hair, for nearly a minute—a ghastly sight to see. Then with a groan he sank on his knees, and his look of blank horror was changed into one of pitiful entreaty.

"Morton! Morton! don't kill me. The dog has deceived me. Don't tell me that *she* is alive too. Don't kill me by telling me that."

"Get up from the grass, Master George. You frighten me. She died ten year ago, or more."

The look of terror left George's face by degrees. It was evident that he had had a fearful shock.

"How long ago did she die, did you say?"

"She died when Reuben was about ten years old. Jim Burton, the Chelsea blacksmith, asked me to come over to her funeral, as having known her once. And I

went. Reuben was the *second* child, Master George. There was one that died."

"Are you certain of that?"

"Positive and certain sure. I took care to be. I see its little coffin carried to the grave. And the poor thing, *she* told me herself that it was the eldest."

"He wrote and told me," said George, "when he was transported, that she was dead, and— There, we have talked enough about that. Do you know that he and I have quarrelled?"

It was Morton's turn to look astonished now. "You and who?" he said, with a blank stare.

"I and Samuel Burton have quarrelled."

"Do you mean to tell me he is not dead yet?"

"Curse him, no. He has far more life left in him than you have, my faithful old friend. He came to my office in Palmerston the other day, and I quarrelled with him."

"That was unwise."

"It was ; but, at all events, he is safe for the present. He is at Perth, in Western Australia, 14,000 miles away."

"I am glad of that," said old Morton. "I suppose he *daren't* come home, eh?"

"Oh, dear, no," said George. "He *daren't* come to England. He would get life for it. Come, let us begin."

They began shooting. Morton, with the licence of a keeper, combined with that of a confidential friend, said, "Mind the dogs, sir. In your present state of nerve, mind the dogs."

But George shot beautifully. The old trick had come back to him again after a few months' practice ; and his hand and eye were as true as ever. He shot recklessly, but wonderfully well, appearing all the time to be so utterly absent and distraught, that old Morton kept on saying, "Mind the dogs, sir ; for Gawd's sake, mind the dogs. It's old Beauty, the Governor's pet ; and if anythink happens to that there spaniel—Lord a mercy, look at that. I say, Master George, hold hard, sir. You ain't in the humour to shoot rabbits before Clumber spannels worth twenty guineas a-piece.. Hold hard, sir. Now, do hold hard."

"I'm shooting better than ever I shot in my life," said George.

"Too beautiful by half. But leave off a minute. That last shot was too risky ; it were indeed."

"All right," said George, going on with his loading. "Have you seen this girl Emma that Erne *raffoles* about?"

"Yes, sir. She is daughter of Jim Burton, the Chelsea blacksmith.—Here, Beauty ; here, Frolic.—There, put down your gun a bit, Master George. There."

"Is her name Burton, too?" said George. "Why, the air seems darkened with Burtons. I thought somehow that she was cousin to Joseph, the secretary. Or did I dream it?"

"Why, *his* name is Burton, too, and she is his own favourite sister," said the old man. "He is Reuben's cousin. But you musn't say the name of Burton in that house. It's a word musn't be said at Stanlake."

"Why not?"

"I don't know, and nobody don't know; and very probably, with an obstinate man like the Governor, there ain't very much *to* know. We were children together, and I know him better than any man alive, and maybe like him better than any man alive, except one. But I tell you that, in the matter of obstinacy, Balaam's ass is a black-and-tan terrier to him. For instance, *I* don't know to this day whether or no he knows that Reuben is Sam, the steward-room boy's son. Mr. Compton don't know either. Mr. Compton says he has never forgiven Sam. We soon found out that we were to call Reuben by his Christian name. And he makes Joe Burton call hisself Joseph."

"But this Emma;" asked George, "is there any chance of Erne's putting his foot in it with her?"

"He swears he will marry her," said Morton. "The

governor did the same thing himself, and so, maybe, won't find much fault."

"Do you know anything about the girl? What is she like?"

"She is a fine-made, handsome girl. But she is better than that. I want to tell you a story about her. I have known her father, Jim Burton, Lord love you, Master George, why as long as I've known Mr. Compton; and they was two boys together, was Mr. Compton and him. You ain't got a cigar, sir?"

"I have known James Burton, sir," continued the old man, lighting one, "ever since I was a boy, and I have always kept up an occasional acquaintance with him: and on one day, just before you came home, I was over there, and he said to me, laughing, 'What a game it is to hear they young folks a-talking, good Lord!' I asked him what he meant, and he said, 'Why, my girl Emma has been pitching it into Master Erne like one o'clock. Such airs with it, too—pointing her finger at him, and raising her voice quite loud, calling him by his Christian name, and he answering of her as *fierce*—' And I asked what he and the girl fell out about, and he said that Master Erne had been going on against you—that you wern't no good; and that she'd up, and given it to him to his face."

"She must be rather a noble person; I'll remembe

him for this," said George. "Come, Morton, let us go home."

So he walked rapidly homeward in deep thought, and Morton guessed what he was thinking about—Reuben. Reuben, George saw, was his own son. There was a slight confusion about the date of his birth, and the poor woman had lied to Morton; but there was no doubt about his features. That square honest face could belong to no son of the thin-faced, hook-nosed Burton. No, there was the real Hillyar face there. That unset mouth was not Hillyar either, certainly, but he knew where *that* came from. Yes; now he knew what it was that attracted him so strangely to Reuben from the first. Reuben had looked on him with the gentle eyes of his dead mother.

The old keeper once, and once only, ventured to look into his face. He hardly knew him, he was so changed since they had gone that road two hours before. His face was raised, and his eyes seemed set on something afar off. His mouth was fixed as though he had a purpose before him, and his whole expression was softened and intensely mournful. The old man had seen him look so when he was a boy; but that was very, very long ago.

CHAPTER VI.

GERTY'S FIRST HYBERNATION TERMINATES.

THE sun was so warm on the south side of the house, that Gerty had come out on the terrace, and was drinking in the floods of warmth and light into her being. The first thing she had done, her very first instinct after a few minutes of what was dreadfully like sun-worship, was to dash at the flowers with a childish cry of delight—anemones, ranunculuses, tulips, narcissuses, all new to her. George found her with her hands full of them, and held out his arms. She gave a laugh of joy and sprang into them, covering his head with her flowers.

Her George had come back to her arms with the warm weather. The ugly cold winter had passed. It was that which had made George cross to her; every one was splenetic during an English winter. The French laughed at us about it. If they could only get back to the land of sunshine and flowers, he would

never be unkind to her. If she and he and baby could only get back again to the dear old majestic forests, among the Orchises and Lobelias and Grevilleas, with the delicious aromatic scent of the bush to fill their nostrils, they would be happy for evermore. How faint and sickly these narcissuses smelt after all, beautiful as they were. One little purple vanilla flower was worth them all. Bah! these flowers smelt like hair oil, after the dear little yellow Oxalis of the plains. She covered his face with kisses, and said only—

“Take me back, dear—take me back to the old forest again. We shall never be happy here, dear. The flowers all smell like pomatum; there is no real warmth in the sun. And it is all so close and confined: there is no room to ride; I should like to ride again now, but there is no place to ride in. Take me back. We were happier even at Palmerston than here. But I want to go back to the bush, and feel the sun in my bones. *This* sun will never get into your bones. Take me back to the Gap, dear.”

“And leave my father here?” said George, laughing.
“For shame.”

“Why shouldn’t he come too?” said Gerty.

“You had better propose it to him,” said George, kissing her again.

“I will this very night,” said the silly little woman.

And, what is more, she did. And, what is still more than that, Sir George, after sitting silent a few minutes, said, "I'll be hanged if I *don't*." And after Gerty had twittered on for ten minutes more in praise of the country of the Eucalypti, he looked up and said to the ambient air, "Why the deuce *shouldn't* I have a spree?" And when she had gone on another quarter of an hour on the same subject, he looked up again, and then and there wished he might be wicked-worded if he didn't. I believe he would have run over, if circumstances which have made the history of these two families worth writing had never occurred. But—to save the reader any unnecessary anxiety—he never did.

Poor little Gerty! How she revelled in this newly-restored love of her husband's. How she got drunk upon it. How the deep well-springs of her love overflowed, and not only drowned George and the baby, but floated every object it came near: horses, butlers, dogs, tulips, ladies'-maids, ranunculuses, and grooms. It was well she was a fool. She was so glad to see George take such notice of the young waterman; what a kind heart he had! Poor little 'thing; who would have dared to tell him the truth about him and Reuben? If she could have been made to understand it, which I doubt, I think it would have gone far to kill her.

Sir George Hillyar marked George's increased at-

tention to Reuben with evident satisfaction. One day, overtaking George in the shrubbery, he took George's arm with a greater show of affection than he had ever done before, and walked up and down, talking very kindly to him. They spoke about no family matters, but it was easy to see that George was gaining in his father's favour. As they were talking together earnestly thus, Mr. Compton and Erne came round the corner on them. Mr. Compton was very much surprised, but noticed that the arm which Sir George took from his elder son's, to shake hands with his old friend, was transferred to Erne, and that George was left to walk alone.

CHAPTER VII.

JAMES BURTON'S STORY : THE GHOST SHOWS A LIGHT FOR
THE SECOND TIME.

It was about three days after our men had struck and left us, that something took place which altered the whole course of our lives in the most singular manner.

It was a dark and very wet night. The King's Road, as I turned out of it into Church Street, at about half-past eleven, was very nearly deserted; and Church Street itself was as silent as the grave.

I had reached as far as the end of the Rectory wall, when, from the narrow passage at the end of the Lime trees, there suddenly came upon me a policeman, our own night-policeman, a man I knew as well as my own fellow-apprentice. At this I, being in a humorous mood, made a feint of being overcome with fear, and staggered back, leaning against the wall for support.

"Stow larks, Jimmy," said the constable, in a low,

eager voice. "Something's going wrong at home. I have orders to stop you, and take you to the inspector."

"So it had come, then," I thought to myself with a sickening feeling at my heart. I couldn't find words to say anything for a moment.

"I had no orders to take you into custody, Jimmy," the constable whispered; "only to tell you to come to the inspector. There's nothing again your hooking on it, if you're so minded."

I answered, returning as I did—and heaven help me! sometimes do still on occasions of emergency—to my vernacular, "I ain't got no call for hooking on it, old chap. Come on." ("Cub awd," is more like the way I said it than anything else.)

And so we came on: my old friend the constable continuing to force home the moral that I weren't in custody, and that there weren't nothink again hooking on it: until, at the corner of the place I have chosen, for fear of an action for libel, to call Brown's Row, we came against the man whom, also for fear of an action for libel, I call Detective Joyce.

He was alone, under the lamp of the Black Lion. When he saw us, he took us over to the other side of the street, and said, quite in a low voice, "Is this the young man Burton!"

I, with that self-assertion—with that instinct of

anticipating adverse criticism—that strange, half cowardly feeling, that there is some unknown advantage in having an innings before the other eleven get in, which is a characteristic of the true Londoner—replied that it was, and that any cove who said that I had been up to anythink, was a speaker of falsehoods, cut off from all hopes of happiness in the next world.

“Well, we all guess that,” said the inspector. “What we want to find out is, how much do you know about your precious flash cousin Reuben’s goings on? I don’t suppose you’ll tell us till you are under cross-examination, as you will be pretty soon. You’re in custody, lad. And *silence*, mind. There; I’ve seen a deal that’s bad, and that’s wrong, but I never saw anything that shook my faith in folks like this. Why, if any man had told me, six weeks ago, that old Jim Burton, the blacksmith, would have harboured Bardolph’s gang and Sydney Sam, I’d have knocked him down, I think.”

“He never knew nothing of it, sir,” I said eagerly. “Me and Joe——”

At this point my old friend, the night-policeman, garotted me with singular dexterity. As he held his hand over my mouth, and I struggled, he said to the detective inspector,

“Come, sir. Fair play is a jewel. Jimmy—I should

say, the young man—is in custody. Take and caution him, sir. I asks you in fairness, take and caution on him.”

The inspector laughed. “Everything you say will be put in evidence against you. I mean, you d—d young fool, hold your tongue.”

This took place against the railings of a milk shop, on the left-hand side as you go down towards the river, opposite a short street which leads into Paulton Square (which, at the time I speak of, was “Shepherd’s Nursery,” or, to old Chelsea folk, “Dove-house Close”). This narrow street, which is now widened, was in my time Brown’s Row, a mere court of six-roomed houses, from among which rose majestically the vast old palace which was in the occupation of my father.

As I stood there, with the horror and disgrace on me of being in custody for the first time in my life; with the terror of I know not what upon me; I could make out, in spite of the darkness and the rain, the vast black mass of our house towering into the sky to the west. I could make out the tall, overhanging, high-pitched roof, and the great dormer-window, which projected from it, towards us, to the east; the windows of the Ghost’s room—of Reuben’s room—of the room where I had stood helpless, waiting for my death. I knew that the present complication was connected

with that room: and with a sick heart I watched the window of it. I was right.

How long did we stand in the rain—the inspector, the constable, and I? A hundred years, say. Yet I looked more at that window than anywhere else; and at last I saw it illuminated—dimly at first, then more brightly; then the light moved: and in a moment the window was dark again. And, while I saw this, with throbbing eyes, the inspector's hand closed on my arm with such a grip as made me glad I was a blacksmith, and he whispered in my ear—

“You young rascal! You see that light? Take me to the room where that light is, or you'd better never have been born! And tell me this, you young scoundrel: Are there two staircases, or only one?”

Now that I saw clearly and entirely, for the first time, what was the matter, I wished to gain a moment or two for thought. And with that end, I (as we low boys used to say in those times) “cheeked” the detective.

“Tell you! Not if I know it! And everything to be took down in evidence! Find out for yourself. I'm in custody, am I? Then take me to the station and lock me up. I ain't going to be kept out in the rain here any longer. Who the deuc eare you, cross-questioning and Paul-Pry-ing? What's your charge against me?”

"You'll know that soon enough, you young fool," said the inspector.

"But I'll hear it now. I want to be took to Milman's Row and the charge made; that's what I want. And I'll have it done, too, and not be kep' busnacking here in the rain. I'll make work for fifty of you in two minutes, if you don't do one thing or the other."

And, so saying, I put my two forefingers in my mouth. What I meant to do, or what I pretended I meant to do, is no business of any one now; all that concerns us now is that I never did it, and never meant to do it. I did not whistle. I have mentioned before that Alsatia was only just round the corner.

Our policeman caught my hands, and said, pathetically, "Jimmy, Jimmy, you wouldn't do such a thing as that!" And the inspector said, "You young devil, I'll remember you!"

"Am I in custody, sir?" I asked.

"No, you ain't," said the inspector. "You may go to the devil if you like."

"Thank you," I said. "Common sense and courtesy are not bad things in their way, don't you think? I shall (now I have bullied you into time for thinking) be delighted to inform you that there is only *one* staircase; that I shall be glad to guide you to that room; that I sincerely hope you may be successful:

and that I only hope you will do the thing as quietly as possible."

My thoughts were these. Reuben, thank heaven, was safely away: and really, when I came to think of the annoyance and disgrace that Mr. Samuel Burton had caused us, I looked forward to his capture and re-transportation with considerable indifference—not to say complacency. Consequently I went willingly with them.

As we came to our door we came upon four other constables, and one by one we passed silently into the old hall. As I passed our sitting-room door, I could see that my mother and Emma were sitting up and waiting for me, and immediately went on, considering what effect the disturbance, so soon to begin, would have on them. And then, going as silently as was possible up the broad staircase, we stood all together in the dark, outside Reuben's room. What should we find there?

At first, it appeared nothing; for the door being opened, the room seemed empty. But in another moment that magnificent ruffian I have called Bill Sykes, had sprung into sight from somewhere, and cast himself headlong at the constables, who were blocking up the door. For one instant I thought he would have got through and escaped; but only for

one. I saw him locked in the deadly grip of a young Irish constable, by name Murphy, and then I saw them hurling one another about the room for a few seconds till they fell together, crashing over a table. They were down and up, and down again, so very quickly, that no one had time to interfere. Sykes had his life-preserver hanging at his wrist, but could not get it shifted into his hand to use it, and the constable had dropped his staff, so that the two men were struggling with no more assistance than Nature had given them. Before or since I have never seen a contest so terrible as between this Englishman and this Irishman.

And after the first few seconds no one saw it but me. The sound of the table falling was the signal for a rush of four men from the inner room, who had, to use a vulgar expression, "funked," following the valiant scoundrel Sykes, but who now tried to make their escape, and found themselves hand to hand with the policemen. So that Sykes and the noble young Irishman had it all to themselves for I should think nearly a minute.

For in their deadly grip, these two did so whirl, and tumble down, and roll over, and get up, and fall again, that I could not, for full that time, do what I wanted. It was clearly a breach of the Queen's peace, and I had

a right to interfere, on those grounds even ; and, moreover, this dog Sykes, in this very room, had coolly proposed the murder of my own humble self. It was for these reasons that I wished, if possible, to assist this young Irishman ; but I could get no opportunity for what seemed to me a long while. At last they were both on their feet again, locked together, and I saw that the Irishman's right hand was clear, and heard it come crashing in with a sickening rattle among Sykes's teeth. Then I got my arm round Sykes's neck, and in spite of his furious efforts managed to hold him fast, and all the while Murphy—bah !—it is too terrible—until, while I was crying out shame, and threatening to let him go, the burglar and I fell together to the ground, and Murphy came down on Sykes heavily, breaking three of his ribs. Yet, in spite of his terrible injuries, in spite of his broken jaw, and such internal injuries as prevented his being tried with the rest, this dog, whom I would not save from hanging to-morrow, never, in spite of his agony, gave one whine of pain from first to last. When we thought we had secured him, and a constable was preparing his handcuffs, he raised his horribly battered face, and burst out again, striking Murphy a blow behind the ear, which made the poor fellow totter and reel, and come headlong down with his nose bleeding, snoring heavily, quite insensible. It took

the whole force of us even then to secure this man, though he was so desperately injured.

But at last there came a time when Sykes lay on his stomach on the floor, conquered and silent, but unyielding; when Murphy, the young Irish constable, had left off snoring so loud, and had made three or four feeble efforts to spit; when Bardolph and Pistol, with three other scoundrels—for whom I have not time to find imaginary names, and whose real names, after a long series of convictions and aliases, were unknown to the police, and possibly forgotten by themselves (for there are limits to the human memory)—were walked off ironed down the stairs; when the constables had lit candles and the room was light; when there was no one left in it after the struggle, but the inspector, and Sykes, with the one man who watched him, and Murphy, with the one man who raised his head and wiped his mouth, and myself, who cast furtive glances at the door of the inner room, and my father, who stood in the door-way in his shirt and trousers, pale and fierce, and who said:

“This is some more of Samuel Burton’s work. This has come from harbouring his boy—his bastard boy—that I treated like one of my own. I knew that I was utterly ruined three days ago. But I thought I might have been left to die without disgrace. May God’s

curse light on Samuel Burton night and day till his death! Have you got him?"

"We haven't got *him*, Burton," said the inspector. "But I am afraid that, in spite of your rather clever denunciation of the man you have shielded so long under the wing of your respectability, we must have *you*. You are in custody, please."

This was the last and worst blow for my father. He spoke nothing for an instant, and then said hoarsely, pointing to me, "Are you going to take *him*?"

The inspector said no; that he did not want me, but told me to be very cautious, and mind what I was about, which I fully intended to do without his caution. In fact, I was doing so now.

Where was my cousin Samuel? When would the inspector notice the door into the other room? And would my father ask me to get his coat? I was very anxious about this last matter. Either I must have gone for it, or have excited the inspector's suspicions; and I wanted to stay where I was.

In a few moments he saw the door. My father and I followed him towards it, intending to give him our assistance should there be any one there. He flung open the door, and, to my surprise, the room was empty. The bed, the old box, the lumber, were all gone. And, moreover, the hole that I had made in the floor three

years before was there no longer. I saw at once that the scoundrels had by means of that hole discovered the vast depth between the floor and the ceiling below, and had utilized it. They had cunningly used old wood too, in their work; and so, walking over the place where the hole had been, I felt no less than four boards loose under my feet; and then I came to the conclusion that no less a person than Samuel Burton was stowed away below.

I ought to have given him up. And I should like to have given him up; but when it came to the push I would not. My heart failed me. I stood there until the inspector turned to go; and the secret of the loose boards was left undiscovered.

If I had known that no one was under there, except poor trembling Nym, I might have given *him* up, perhaps. But Samuel Burton was not there at all. Samuel Burton had found that William Sykes was rather too clumsy and incautious a gentleman to have anything to do with, and had, in his usual manner, pitched the whole gang overboard. That is to say that, seeing Reuben safe out of the way, he had dropped a line to Scotland Yard, which resulted as we have seen. Samuel himself was somewhere else, at far different work.

I was furiously indignant at my father's being arrested. Looking at it from my point of view, it seemed

to me to be a perfectly unnecessary insult. I suppose it could not be helped. One thing was certain, however, that it would be the last ounce on the camel's back to him, and that in future my father would never raise his head again in England.

Two things remained to be done—the one, to fetch my father's coat and waistcoat from his bedroom, which was not difficult; and the other, to break the fact of his arrest to my mother, which was easy enough, but not a pleasant task by any means—at all events in anticipation.

But, when I knocked at their bedroom, I found her up and dressed, with his things ready; and not only her, but Emma. And my mother only said cheerily, "Dear, dear. What a shame. Going and taking of father. There, Jim, my dear, take him his coat and waistcoat; and here's the old horse-rug. And we'd best sit up to go for Mr. Child and Mr. Chancellor in the morning to bail him. There, cut away, old man. They ain't took you, I know; for I listened to 'em. On the stairs I did. God bless us, father will be in a taking. We must have him home by breakfast, or they sausages will spile. Cut away, or he'll catch his death."

And so she chattered on, and packed me out of the room. But when I was gone, Emma tells me, she broke

out into wild hysterical wrath, and denounced fiercely and wildly—denounced Bill Joyce (as she irreverently called the inspector), and said that marrying eavesdroppers and earwigs might be some folks' line, but that it was not hers, and never had been. She said how true her instinct was, to have refused to say anything to the man twenty years before; though she thought that even an earwig might have forgotten in that time, and not disgraced her husband like that; and so she went on until she got quieter. And at last she said, as Emma tells me:—

“May God forgive me, as I forgive them all. May God forgive Samuel Burton, whom I met on the stairs last week, and fainted away stone dead on account on. He has been an unlucky man to us. It's on his account that I hate the name of Hillyar. It was through his going to them, child, that all our troubles came about. He was not so bad till he got corrupted by that devil George Hillyar. I hate the name. I am glad of one thing in this break up, my Emma; and that is this—we shall see no more of this Master Erne. You are a child, and don't know. But I tell you, that the time is come for you to part with him. Better too soon than too late. Red eyes are better than a broken heart.”

My mother, on the other hand, tells me that, as she said this, she looked at Emma, and saw—why, many

things ; among others, that it *was* too late. Emma was sitting opposite her, deadly pale, with a worn, wearied look on her face, but perfectly quiet and self-possessed. She said,

“What you say is very true, dear. He and I must part for ever. Perhaps, mother, if this had not happened, I might have begged to have a little, only a very little more of him ; for—. But now, I thank God, that has become impossible. This business will separate us for ever ; and it is best so. I might have fallen in love with him, for aught we know, and what a sad business that would have been ; would it not ? May I see him only once—just to wish him good-bye ? Only once, mother ? Oh, mother ! mother ! only once.”

“No,” said my mother, promptly, “that is all fiddle-de-dee, and stuff, and nonsense. It’s all over and done, and dead and buried, and I won’t have it took and dug up again. Take and go along with you, I tell you.”

And so my mother scolded her, and then went to her solitary bed—solitary the first time for twenty years—and lay down and wept wildly. “I am a wicked, stupid, useless woman, oh, Lord,” she said. “But, Lord ! I did not see it. And it is to be visited on her head. The fathers upon the children ; my folly on her. But, Lord ! it will break her heart—my own Emma’s heart. I seen it to-night, and I know it. Oh, Lord ! wicked

woman that I am, let the judgment fall on me, Lord !
Let me suffer, but take her to Thy bosom and comfort
her."

* * * * *

We shall see how my mother's prayer was answered.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIR GEORGE'S ESCRITOIRE.

POOR Reuben Burton, whose only crime had been faithfulness to the scoundrel he called father, received a message that some one wished to speak to him at a certain public-house, and was then and there quietly arrested and taken to London; so that during the events which followed he was in prison, be it remembered. That he was *very* wrong in receiving his father into the Burtons' house at Chelsea we cannot say. But a little more resolution would have saved the Burtons an infinity of trouble.

The Hillyars wondered where he was. Erne had the impudence to propose cutting the dam to search for his body; and Sir George said, loftily, that it was, in his opinion, rather contemptible taste in Erne, to refer, to allude, however faintly, to an idiotic and highly expensive escapade, which ought to be consigned to oblivion. Erne proposed to send for Joseph, the secretary,

to take his father's words down ; and so they had one of their numerous pleasant squabbles—the one among them all which Erne remembered best—while Gerty sat and laughed at them.

She had taken the baby, and a pile of flowers, and had set herself down under the south wall, opposite the sun-dial, just outside the drawing-room window, in a blazing heat, fit to roast a peacock ; and there she was now, with the baby and the flowers, doing something or another with them, though whether she was nursing the flowers, or tying up the baby, it was hard to say. There she was, as happy as ever a little mother was, baking herself, and cooing in her infinite contentment.

Her suggestion about Reuben Burton, which she made in perfect faith, was that he had gone into the township, and got on the burst. This brought the heartiest roar of laughter from George that we have ever heard him indulge in. Gerty was very much delighted. She determined that she had said something very good, and must try it again.

The old butler never went to bed before Sir George, but always sat up in one of the easy chairs, in the third or smallest drawing-room, with the door open. For exactly opposite this door was the door of Sir George's study, and so, if Sir George went to sleep in his chair, as he very often did, the butler could, after a reasonable

time, go in and wake him up, and take him to bed, generally in a very stupid state.

But very often the butler would go to sleep, and his candle would go out, and he would wake in the dark, wondering where he was, and would go in to rouse Sir George, and would find that Sir George had gone to bed hours ago ; and that the sparrows outside, after a sleepy night's debate of it (that honourable member the nightingale having been on his legs for nearly four hours, and having concluded his answer to the Opposition about daybreak), had woke up and divided, and had all got into the wrong lobbies, and were pitching into the tellers : in other words, that it was broad daylight. And this very night he went to sleep in this way, and let his candle burn down.

Sir George that evening had complained of its being cold, which it most certainly was not, and had ordered the fire to be lit in his study. The butler in the little drawing-room, snoozing in the chair, did not feel cold. But Sir George sat close before the blaze, musing, and looking into the coals, thinking intensely.

It may have been this, to some extent, which caused certain things to happen this very evening, of which you will hear immediately. We cannot say. We cannot see the inside of a man's head, unless we open it. But I don't think it was a good thing for Sir George,

with his apoplectic habit, to sit close before a hot fire, thinking intensely.

While we are writing we have looked into the fire, and all that we have seen there was Glen Roy and Glen Spean, filled with gleaming ice, and the little double summit of Mealderry, like an island in the midst of it : in fact, Lyell has been answerable for our coal formations ; in the which thing there is a certain sort of fitness. To-morrow it will be some one else who is answerable for the vagaries. To-morrow in the fire, one may see Messieurs Assolant and Renan receiving, at the International Exhibition of 1873, at Chicago or Charleston, as the case may be, the Aluminium medal, for having achieved, and entirely and utterly mastered, the subjects of the English nation and the Christian religion. Or, possibly even, M. Thiers in the act of being presented with a new pair of brass spectacles by the Emperor, for his accounts of the battle of Waterloo, and other battles ; which, doubtless, as specimens of military history, stood alone until Cousin Tom and Cousin Jerry fell out in America.

The fact is that, if you are a real fire-worshipper, you can't control the fantastic images which present themselves to your retina, when you have your brain rather full of blood, and are comfortably looking into a good coal fire. As in the beautiful old optical experiment of the

glass globe in the dark (which some wiseacres, one of whom, at least, ought to have known better, have invested with supernatural properties, and called the Magic Crystal), you *see* what you are thinking about, as you do in dreaming ; though in an inferior degree.

Sir George Hillyar sat and looked into the fire. From the first moment he looked there he saw four figures. They had been with him nearly all day, and now they stared at him out of the coal chasms. They were the figures of his two wives, with their two sons ; and, as he looked at them, he thought deeply and intensely over the results of his life.

How well he remembered his first courtship. What a noble, square-faced, bold-eyed young fellow he was, when he first met Kate Bertram at the Lymington ball. How well he could remember her that first night. How beautiful she was ; and he the madman, seeing, as he did, the wild devil in her eyes, admired it, and was attracted by it. "She has a spice of the devil in her," he had said to a friend. She had indeed.

And then by degrees he had found out the truth. At first he had laughed at the horrid idea ; then he had grown moody over it ; then he had entertained it sometimes, and at last he had taken it to his bosom and nursed it. She had never loved him. She had always loved that rattling, merry sailor, Lieutenant Some.

Then he was slowly growing to hate her ; until at last, she justified his hatred by dishonouring him.

And then her son. Had he been just to George ? Had George's wickedness justified all the neglect he had received ? Did he, the father, never feel something like satisfaction at the boy's career, as furnishing him with an excuse for the dislike he had always felt for him ? And how much of that reckless despair had been caused by this very same neglect ? These were terrible questions. A few months ago he would have answered them by an overwhelming flood of self-justification ; but death was drawing nearer, and after death the judgment. He left them unanswered.

Was he doing right in disinheriting George ? Was he not cutting off George's last hope of reform by impoverishing him in this way ? He went to the *escritoire*, let down the desk of it, and, sitting down before it, took out his will and began reading it.

Eight thousand a-year to Erne, and George left nearly a beggar, with the title and establishment to keep up. It was not just. He said aloud, " I fear I am *not* doing justice to George. But my Erne—" He laid down the will again, and went once more and sat before the fire.

Then the old man lived some more of his life over again. His brain was very active, and his memory most wonderfully good to-night. He felt again the

indignation, the shame, and the horror, which had torn him, as it were, to pieces, when he discovered that his wife had fled. The dislike which he had allowed to grow up in his mind towards her had been no preparation for *that*. Could he ever have dreamt that she would have *dared*? Could he ever have supposed that his calm, gentlemanly obstinacy would have driven her to commit such a nameless horrible crime (for so it was to him) as to leave the husband she hated for the man she loved? The agony of recollecting the shame of that dreadful time brought the blood humming into his ears; but it went back again, and throbbed itself into stillness once more.

For, passing through, in his fancy, in his memory, lightly enough, and yet correctly, the period which followed on this, the great horrible shame of his life; he went through a time of dull despair; then a longer one of godless cynicism; and then a longer one yet, of dull acquiescence in things as they were: the time when he believed that God had got tired of him, and had put him aside to be dealt with only after death. And, when his imagination had taken him through these sad, sad old times, and he had felt, let us hope in a less degree, all his old agonies once more; then the old gentleman's face began to brighten, and his stern set mouth to relax into a happy smile.

For, wandering on through the wood of his life—a wood, as he humbly acknowledged, full of strange paths (of which paths he had generally taken the wrong one), tangled with brambles, which he had never broken through—going on, I say, through this wood of his life, which he now began to see was not an honest English copse, but a labyrinth, in which he had never turned the right way, and which he was now going through all, again—he came to this:

He began to remember the dear old scent—far dearer to him, and some others, than the whiff one gets opposite Piesse or Rimmel's shop—of his newly-loaded gun. Then he thought of fresh trodden turnips in September. Then a pheasant whirled above his head; and then he was breast-high among the golden fern under the browning hazels: and then, rustling ankle-deep in the fallen leaves, came Mary Hawkins, the gamekeeper's daughter, the beautiful and the good, and her arm was round his neck and her breath was on his cheek, and she said to him, "It is not too late, yet, George. God has sent me to save you, my love."

And when she had done her work God took her; and left in her place Erne to keep him from despair. Erne the delight of his life, the gentle handsome lad, who had wound himself so round his heart. He could not take this money from Erne. It might be

unjust, but it was so pleasant to think of Erne's having it.

Yet death was near, and might come at any time. And afterwards—some justice must be done to George. Half, say. There was the will, and there was the fire—and Erne—and George—

* * * * *

The butler was awakened by a light, a sudden light, on his face, and a sound which seemed to him to be one of those terrible, inexplicable, horrible noises, which never occur in life, but which are sometimes heard towards the end of a very bad dream—of one of those dreams from which the sleeper awakes himself by an effort, simply from terror of going on with it any further. Sir George was standing in the corridor before him, with a candle held close to his face, and a drawn sword in his hand, looking down the passage. The poor old gentleman's face was horribly distorted, and red; and, before the old butler had time to stagger to his feet, the noise which had awakened him came again. It was Sir George Hillyar's voice, for the butler saw him open his mouth; but the tone of it was more nearly like the ghastly screech of an epileptic than anything the old man had ever heard. He saw Sir George stand for an instant, pointing down the corridor with his sword, and crying out, "Reuben! Reuben! Help! Help!

Come at once, and I will do justice to all. Reuben ! Reuben !” And then he saw the poor old gentleman go staggering down the passage, with his drawn sword in his hand ; and he followed him, very truly sorry for his kind old master, but reflecting, nevertheless, that all folks, high or low, must go off somehow, and hoping, even in the few minutes following, that his summons might come in a more peaceful manner. He saw clearly that Sir George had got his first stroke, and that he would never be the man he was any more.

“I hope he ain’t altered his will,” said the sleepy butler, a red-hot Erneist, to himself, as he followed poor reeling Sir George down the passage. “Poor dear old master ! I wonder if he really is ill or no. Maybe there ain’t much the matter with him. I wish I dared collar him. Where is he going ?”

Sir George, meanwhile, with his sword in his right hand, feeling the wall with his left, which held the candlestick, staggering fearfully from time to time, had passed from passage to passage, until he had come to the kitchen. Once or twice at first he had cried out, in that terrible tone we have noticed before, for Reuben, but latterly had been silent.

The terrified butler saw him enter the kitchen. The next instant there was a heavy fall, and, following his master in, he found darkness and silence. He cried out

for help, but none came for a few moments ; only a cat in the butler's pantry hard by knocked down some glasses, and tried to break out of the window in her terror. The silence was terrible. He shouted again, and this time roused the household. When lights were brought they found Sir George lying on his face quite dead, with his sword and his candle thrown far from him in his fall.

When they had carried him up, the first thing the butler did was to send for old Morton, the keeper, who came at once.


"Dead!" he said ; "he ain't dead, I tell you. Here, Sir George, sir, rouse up. I've see him this way twenty times." He quite refused to believe it. He kept on at intervals speaking to the dead man. Sometimes he would give him his title ; at others he would merely call him George. At one time he would be angry with him ; at another he would almost whisper to him, and remind him of his dogs and his guns, and scenes which the closed eyes should never look on any more ; but at last he did nothing but sit and moan wearily. No one dared interfere, until the new Sir George Hillyar came, and quietly and kindly led him away.

CHAPTER IX.

JAMES BURTON'S STORY : MISS BROWN'S TROUBLES COME TO AN END, WHILE MR. ERNE HILLYAR'S FAIRLY COMMENCE.

WELLINGTON ROW, Kentish Town is a row of semi-respectable houses, in the most dreary and commonplace of all the dreary and commonplace suburbs which lie in the north of London. I should suppose that the people who inhabit them may generally be suspected of having about a hundred a year, and may certainly be convicted, on the most overwhelming evidence, of only keeping one servant.

At least Mrs. Jackson, at No. 7, only kept one, and she wasn't half strong enough for the place. Mrs. Jackson didn't mean to say that she wasn't a willing girl enough, but she was a forgetful slut, who was always posturing, and running after the men, "and so at times it was 'ard to keep your temper with her; indeed it were, I do assure you."



Now the history of the matter is simply this. Martha Brown, the servant-of-all-work ("slavey," as a snob would so suggestively have called her), was a delicate and thoughtful girl, which things, of course, are serious delinquencies in a pot-scourer and door-step cleaner; but, beside and above these crimes, she had committed the crowning one of being most remarkably pretty—which, of course, was not to be tolerated.

So she had rather a hard life of it, poor thing. Mrs. Jackson was not, on the whole, very kind to her; and, being a she-dragon, not well-favoured herself, she kept such watch and ward over her pretty servant; accused her so often of flirtations which were entirely imaginary, and altogether did so wrangle, scold, and nag at her; that sometimes, in the cold winter's morning, wearily scrubbing the empty grate, or blowing with her lips the smouldering fire, the poor thing has bent down her head and wished that she was dead, and calmly asleep beside her mother in the country churchyard.

She was a country-bred girl, an orphan, who had come up to London to "better" herself, (Lord help her!) had taken service in this dull, mean neighbourhood, and was now fearful of moving from sheer terror of seeing new faces. And so here she had

been, in this dreadful brick-and-mortar prison, for more than three years, rising each morning only to another day of dull drudgery of the lowest kind. Perhaps, sometimes, there might be a moment or two for a day-dream of the old place she loved. But day-dreams are dangerous for a slave with a scolding mistress. The cat may get at the milk, the meat may burn; and then wrangle and nag for an hour or so, and, ah, me! it is all over—

“She looks, and her heart is in heaven : but they fade—
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade ;
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colours have all passed away from her eyes.”

What kept her up, you wonder! Only hope. And—well! well! “People in that rank of life don’t fall in love in the same way as we do,” said a thoroughly good fellow to me the other day. I beg solemnly to assure him that he is quite mistaken.

Every time when anything went wrong with this poor little Cinderella, as soon as the first scalding tears were wiped, she had a way, learnt by long and bitter experience, of calling up a ghost of a smile on her poor face. She would say to herself, “Well, never mind. My holiday comes next Sunday three weeks.”

I beg to apologize for telling one of the most beautiful stories ever written (that of Cinderella) over

again in my clumsy language. But there are many thousand Cinderellas in London, and elsewhere in England, and you must ask Dr. Elliotson or Dr. Bucknill how many of them go mad every year.

And, as the monthly holiday approached, there would be such a fluttering of the poor little heart about the weather—for it is quite impossible to look one's best if it rains, and one likes to look one's best, under certain circumstances, you know—and such a stitching together of little bits of finery, that the kettle used to boil over sadly often, and unnoticed coals to fall into the dripping-pan, and wrap the meat in the wild splendours of a great conflagration; and there would be more scolding and more tears. However, all the scolding and all the tears in the world can't prevent Sunday morning from coming; and so it came. And this was a rather special Sunday morning—for there was a new bonnet with blue ribands, a rather neat thing; and so she was rather anxious for a fine day.

But it rained steadily and heavily. It was very provoking. The people were going into church by the time she reached Clerkenwell Prison, and it still rained on: but, what was worse than that, there was nobody there!

Up and down the poor child walked, under the

gloomy prison-wall, in the driving rain. It is not an inspiring place at any time, that Clerkenwell Prison-wall, as you will agree if you notice it the next time you go by. But, if you walk for an hour or more there, under a heavy disappointment, in a steady rain, waiting for some one who don't come, you will find it more melancholy still.

The people came out of church, and the street was empty once more. Then there were tears, but they were soon followed by sunshine. The spoilt bonnet was nothing now; the wet feet were forgotten; the wretched cheap boots, made of brown paper sewn together with rotten thread, the dreary squalor of the landscape, the impertinences of passing snobs, were nothing now;—everything was as it should be. For there was the ring of an iron heel on the pavement, and the next minute a young fellow came hurling round the corner, and then—

Well! Nobody saw us do it but the policeman, and he was most discreet. He looked the other way. He had probably done the same thing himself often enough.

I had run all the way from Chelsea, and had almost given up all hopes of finding her; so, in the first flutter of our meeting, what between want of breath, and—say, pleasurable excitement—I did not find time

to tell her that my news was bad; nay, more than bad—terrible. I hadn't the heart to tell her at first, and, when I had found the heart, I couldn't find the courage. And so I put it off till after dinner. She and I dined at the same shop the last time we were in England, and oh! the profound amazement of the spirited proprietor at seeing a lady in thick silks and heavy bracelets come in to eat beef! We had to tell him all about it; we had, indeed.

At last it all came out, and she was sitting before me with a scared, wild face. My cousin Reuben and my father had been arrested, but my father immediately released. Sir George Hillyar was dead, and Joe's heart was broken.

"The grand old gentleman dead!"

"Yes. Got up in the night out of his chair, wandered as far as the kitchen, and fell dead!"

"How very dreadful, dear."

There was something more dreadful coming, however. I had to break it to her as well as I could. So I took her hand and held it, and said—

"And now we are utterly ruined, and the forge fire is out."

"But it will be lit up again. You and your father have your skill and strength left. You will light the forge fire again."

"Yes," I answered, "but it will be sixteen thousand miles away. In Australia, dear."

Now I had done it. She gave a low piteous moan, and then she nestled up close to me, and I heard her say, "Oh, I shall die! I know I shall die! I can't bear it without you. I couldn't have borne it so long if I hadn't thought of you night and day. Oh, I hope I shall die. Ask your sister Emma to pray God to take me, dear."

"Why you don't think I am going without you, do you?" I hurriedly asked.

"You *must* go," she answered, crying.

"I know I must; and you must come too. Are you afraid?"

"How could I be afraid with you, darling. But you *must* go, and I must stay behind and die."

"Never mind about that, love. Are you afraid?"

"Not with you."

"Very well, then. You'll have the goodness to get a recommendation from the parson, as an assisted emigrant, *at once*. If you can't, you must pay your passage and that'll be a twister. Now go home and give warning."

"I couldn't do it, dear," she said, with her sweet, honest eyes beginning to sparkle through her tears, and her mouth beginning to form a smile.

" Couldn't do what ?"

" Give warning. I should fall down in a dead faint at her feet."

" Nonsense," I said. " Have it out the minute she opens the door."

" She won't open it. I go in the airy way, and as soon as she hears me come in she comes down and has a blow up at me."

" Can't you get in a wax, old girl ?" I asked with an air of thoughtful sagacity, for I saw the difficulty at once.

Old girl thought this perfectly hopeless ; and, indeed, I thought so too.

" Then I tell you what. Don't give her time to begin. Get between her and the door, and says you, ' If you please, ma'am—if you please, ma'am—I wish to give you a month's warning.' "

" Month's warning," repeated she.

" And then you take and hook it upstairs."

" Hook it upstairs," repeated she.

" You haven't got to *say* that to her. That's what you've got to *do*. When you come to the word ' warning,' say it out clear, and cut off."

At last, after many trials and repetitions, I got her to give me warning in a reasonably audible tone of voice ; after which I saw her home. She made a mess of it after all, as I thought she would all along. She

let the woman get between her and the door; and so had to stay and be scolded. But it "eventuated" rather well; for she *did* get into a "wax" for the first time in her life, and gave the woman as good as she brought. Astonished at her own suddenly-acquired audacity, and perfectly unused to fighting, she committed the mistake, so common among young fighters (who have never been thrashed, and therefore don't know the necessity of quarter), of hitting too hard. The end of which was that she was turned out the next day for a nasty, impudent, careless, sleepy, aggravating, and ungrateful little audacious hussey; which was a grand success—a piece of luck, which even I, with my highly sanguine temperament, had never dared to hope for.

While I was yet standing in the street, and making the remarkable discovery that I was wet through, and rather thinking that it must have been raining cats and dogs ever since I had been out, some one came and laid his hand upon my shoulder, and, looking up, I saw Erne Hillyar. He told me that he had come to find me, and then he told me something else—something which made me sit down on a muddy door-step in the rain, and stare at him with blank amazement and horror.

Erne Hillyar told me that he was a homeless beggar.

CHAPTER X.

LE ROI EST MORT—VIVE LE ROI.

"I CANNOT conceal from you the fact, my dear Sir George Hillyar," said Mr. Compton, the morning after the funeral, "that your father's death at this moment is a very serious catastrophe indeed."

"Very serious to me, I suppose?" said George.

"Very much so, indeed. It is my belief that, if your father had lived another week, he would have altered his will in your favour."

"You are quite sure that he has not done so?"

"Quite sure. He would never have done it without my assistance."

"Do you hear that, you—you—Lady Hillyar?" said George, with a savage snarl, turning to Gerty, who was sitting nursing the baby.

She looked so very scared that old Compton interposed. "My dear Sir George—now really—her ladyship is not strong—

"Silence, sir," replied George; "I am master here, and allow no one to interfere between me and my wife. Leave the room, Lady Hillyar, and ask your fellow-conspirator against your husband,—the gamekeeper's grandson, my worthy half-brother—if he will be so condescending as to be so obliging as to come and hear this precious will, which he and the lawyer seem to have concocted between them, read out."

"Sir George, I will not be insulted; you will remove your papers to some other office."

"Delighted, I am sure," said George, with an insolent sneer; for the old devil of temper was raging full career within him, and there was no help by. "It won't be worth much to any one. I shall insure this house over its value, and then burn the God-forgotten old place down. I don't care what I do."

"Sir George, for God's sake!" said Compton, shocked to see that the devil had broken loose once more after such a long sleep. "Suppose any one heard you, and there was a fire afterwards!"

"I don't care!" said George, throwing himself into the chair in front of the escrivore, in which his father had sat the night before he died. "Oh, here is the noble Erne, who plots and conspires to rob his brother of his inheritance, and then sneaks night and day after my wife to prevent her getting the ear of my father."

"George, George, you are irritated; you don't mean what you say."

"Not mean it!"

"You can't, you know; you are a gentleman, and you can't accuse me of such a thing as that."

"I will! I do!" said George.

"Then I say that it is false. That is all. *I* do not wish to continue this discussion now; but it is false."

"False!" shouted George, rising and advancing towards Erne. "Is it false that I have sat watching you so many months, always interfering? Is it false that I have sat and cursed you from the bottom of my heart? Perhaps you will say it is false that I curse you now—curse the day you were born—curse the day that my father ever caught sight of your low-bred drab of a mother."

George had come too close, or had raised his hand, or something else—no man knows how it began; but he had hardly uttered these last words when he and his brother were at one another's throats like tigers, and the two unhappy young men, locked together in their wicked struggle, were trying to bear one another down, and uttering those inarticulate sounds of fury which one hears at such times only, and which are so strangely brutelike.

Before Compton had time to cry "murder" more

than once, George was down, with his upper lip cut open by a blow from Erne's great signet-ring. He rose up, pale with deadly hatred, and spoke. His wrath was so deep that cursing availed him nothing. He only said in a low voice, "I will never, never forgive that blow as long as I live. If I ever get a chance of returning it, remember it and tremble, Master Erne."

Erne had not had time to cool and get ashamed of himself yet. He merely returned his brother a look of fierce scorn.

"Now," said George, "let us have this precious will read, and let me turn him out of the house; I shall have that satisfaction. Have you the will?"

"It is in here," said Mr. Compton. "This is the key of the *escritoire*. Sir George always kept it here, because he had a fancy that in some desperate extremity he might wish to put in a codicil in a hurry. We shall find it in this morocco box.—God above us! What is this? Let me sit down: I am a very old man and can't stand these shocks. There is no will at all here!"

"No will?" said both of the brothers together.

"Not a vestige of one," replied Compton, looking suddenly up at George.

George laughed. "I haven't stolen it, old fox. If

I had known where it was, I would have. In an instant. In a minute."

"I don't think you have taken it, Sir George," said Compton. "Your behaviour would have been different, I think. But the will was here the day before Sir George died, I *know*, and it is not here now."

"Look! Search! Hunt everywhere, confound you!"

"I will do so. But I have a terrible fancy that your father destroyed this will, and was struck down before he had time to make another. I have a strong suspicion of it. This will has been here for ten years, and never moved. My opinion is that there is no will."

He made some sort of a search—a search he knew to be hopeless, while George stood and looked on with ghastly terror in his face. Erne had grown deadly pale, and was trembling. At last the search was over, and Compton, sitting down, burst into a violent fit of sobbing.

George spoke first. "Then," said he, in a voice which rattled in his throat, "everything is, with the usual exceptions, mine?"

"I fear so."

"Every stick of timber, every head of game, every acre of land, is it not so?—all mine without dispute?"

"Nearly so. If we can find no will. And that we shall never do."

"You have heard what he has said," said George to Erne, wiping his mangled lips, "and you heard what I said just now. This house is mine. Go. I will never forget and never forgive. Go."

Erne turned on his heel, and went without a word. The last he remembers was seeing his brother stand looking at him with his face all bloody, scowling. And then he was out of the house into the sunshine, and all the past was a cloud to him.

God had punished him suddenly and swiftly. He very often does with those He loves best.

CHAPTER XI.

JAMES BURTON'S STORY : ERNE'S NURSE.

"WILL God ever forgive me, Jim? I wish my right hand had been withered before I did it. I shall never forget that bleeding face any more. Oh, my brother! my brother! I would have loved you; and it has come to this!"

And so he stood moaning in the rain before me, in the blank, squalid street; and I sat on the step before him, stunned and stupid.

"I shall never be forgiven. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord. Look, his blood is on my right hand now! How could I? How could I?"

What could I say? I do not know even now what I ought to have said. I certainly did not then. I was very sorry at his having struck his brother certainly; but seeing him stand homeless and wet in the rain was more terrible to me. I did not for one instant

doubt that what he said was perfectly true, and even then I began to ask of myself, What will become of him?

"Oh, father! father! I wish I was with you! I shall never join you now. He used to say that he would teach me to love my mother when we met her in heaven: but we can never meet now—never—never!"

This last reflection seemed to my boy-mind so very terrible that I saw it was time to do or say something; and so I took his arm and said—

"Come home, master, and sleep."

"Home! my old Jim? I have no home."

"As long as I have one you have one, Master Erne," I answered, and he let me take him away with me.

It was a weary walk. I had to tell him of our misfortunes, of our ruin, of Reuben's ruin, of Joe's terrible disappointment, and of the sad state of mind into which he had fallen—of the cold forge, of the failing food. I had to tell him that the home I was asking him to share with me had nothing left to adorn it now but love; but that we could give him that still. It eased his heart to hear of this. Once or twice he said, "If I had only known!" or "Poor Reuben!" And when I saw that he was quieter, I told him about our plans; and, as I did so, I saw that he listened with a startled interest.

I told him that Mr. Compton had advanced money to take us all to Cooksland, and that we went in a month, or less; and so I went on thinking that I had interested him into forgetting his brother for a time. But, just as we turned into Church Street, he said—

“*She* must never know it. I shall die if she knows it. I shall go mad if she knows it.”

“What?”

“Emma must never know that I struck my brother; remember that.”

I most willingly agreed, and we went in.

The dear comfortable old place was nearly dismantled, but there was the same old hearth, still warm. Our extreme poverty was, so to speak, over, but it had left its traces behind still. My father looked sadly grave; and as for my mother, though sitting still—as her wont was on Sunday—I saw her eye rambling round the room sometimes, in sad speculation over lost furniture. As I came in I detected her in missing the walnut-secretary, at which my father used to sit and make up his accounts. She apologised to me also silently, with only her eyes, and I went and kissed her. A great deal may pass between two people, who understand one another, without speaking.

Emma was sitting in the centre of the children,

telling them a story; and she came smiling towards Erne, holding out her hand. And, when he saw her he loved so truly, he forgot us all; and, keeping his hand away from her, he said, "No! no! not that hand. That one is—I have hurt it. You must never take that hand again, Emma. It's bloody."

I, foreseeing that he would say too much, came up, took his hand, and put it into hers. But, when she saw his face—saw his pale scared look—she grew pale herself, and dropped his hand suddenly. And then, putting together his wild appearance, and the words he had just used, she grew frightened, and went back with a terrified look in her face, without one word, and gathered all the children around her as if for protection.

"You see even she flies from me. Let me go out and hide my shame elsewhere. I am not fit for the company of these innocent children. I had better go."

This was said in a low tone apart to me. My affection for him showed me that the events of the morning had been too heavy a blow for him, and that, to all intents and purposes, poor Erne was beside himself. There was an ugly resolute stare in the great steel-blue eyes which I had never seen before, and which I hope never to see again. I was terrified at the idea of his going out in his present state. He

would only madden himself further ; he was wet and shivering now, and the rain still came down steadily, I could see no end to it.

“Come up to sleep, Master Erne.”

“Sleep ! and dream of George’s bloody face ? Not I. Let me go, old boy.”

“Please don’t go out, sir,” said I louder, casting a hurried look of entreaty to Emma, who could hear nothing, but was wondering what was the matter, “it will be your death.”

“Yes, that is what I want. Let me go.”

“Won’t Freddy go and kiss his pretty Master Erne ?” said Emma’s soft voice, suddenly and hurriedly. “Won’t Freddy go and look at his pretty watch ? Run then, Fred, and kiss him.”

Thus enjoined, Fred launched himself upon Erne, and clasped his knee. It was with an anxious heart that I raised him up, and put him into Erne’s arms. It was an experiment.

But it was successful. The child got his arm round his neck, and his little fingers twined in his hair ; and, as I watched Erne, I saw the stare go out of his eyes, and his face grow quieter and quieter until the tears began to fall ; and then, thinking very properly that I could not mend matters, I left Erne alone with the child and with God.

I went and thanked Emma for her timely tact, and put her in possession of the whole case; and then, finding Erne quiet, I made Fred lead him up to bed. It was high time, for he was very ill, and before night was delirious.

My mother gave herself up to a kind of calm despair when she saw what had happened, and that Erne would be an inmate of the house for some time, and that of necessity Emma must help to nurse him. She spoke to me about it, and said that she supposed God knew best, and that was the only comfort she had in the matter.

In his delirium he was never quiet unless either she or I were at his side. For five days he was thus. The cold he had caught, and the shock of excitement he had sustained, had gone near to kill him; but it was his first illness, and he fought through it, and began to mend.

My mother never said one word of caution to Emma. She knew it would be useless. The constant proximity to Erne must have been too much for any efforts which Emma might have made against her passion. *I* was glad of it. My father merely went gravely about his work; was as respectful and attentive to Erne as ever; while my mother had, as I said before, resigned herself to despair, and left the whole matter in the hands of God.

Poor Joe ! His was a bitter disappointment. Secretary to a member of Parliament : and now—Joe Burton, the humpbacked son of the Chelsea blacksmith ; all his fine ambition scattered to the winds. He sat silently brooding now for hours ; for a week I think he scarcely spoke. Sometimes he would rouse himself, and help at what there was to do, as a matter of duty ; but as soon as he could he sat down again, and began eating his heart once more.

I need not say that we were all very gentle and careful with him. We had somehow got the notion that all our sufferings were as nothing to poor Joe's. I wonder who put that notion afloat. I wonder whether Joe unconsciously did so himself, by his tacit assumption that such was the case. I think it very likely. But Joe was never for an instant selfish or morose ; unless his want of cheerfulness was selfish. He certainly might have assisted at that family harmony I spoke of ; but then he was at Stanlake while we were learning the tune at home.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR GEORGE HILLYAR IS WITNESS FOR CHARACTER.

AND dark over head all the while hung the approaching cloud. Reuben, Sykes, and the rest of them had been remanded, and the day drew nigh when Reuben would be committed for trial.

The question was, How far was he really complicated with Sykes and the gang? That he took his father in, and lodged him, and hid him, could not go very far against him: nay, would even stand in his favour. Then his character was undeniably good until quite lately: and, thirdly and lastly, he had been absent at Stanlake for a long while. These were the strong points in his favour. Nevertheless, since his father had made his most unfortunate appearance, there was very little doubt that Reuben had been seen very often in the most lamentably bad company. It was hard to say how it would go.

At last the day came on. I was the only one of the family who went, and I left laughing, promising to bring Reuben home to dinner; but still I was very anxious, and had tried to make up my mind for the very worst. There was a considerable crowd in the police-court; and, as I was trying to elbow my way as far forward as I could, to hear what case was on, I felt a hand on my shoulder, and looking round, saw Sir George Hillyar.

"Come out of court with me," he said; "I wish to speak with you. The case will not be on this half-hour."

I wondered why he should care so much about it; but I obeyed, and we went out together, and walked to a quiet spot.

"What is your opinion about this matter? What do his associates say—these thieves and prostitutes among whom he has been brought up? What do they say about his chance?"

He said this with such fierce eagerness that I swallowed the implied insult, and answered—

"Six and half-a-dozen, sir. I know him to be innocent, but who is to prove him so?"

"Why did not your father prevent this?" he went on, in a milder tone. "Why did not *you* prevent it? Your father is a man of high character. Why did he

not take care of this poor deserted orphan? Christian charity should have made him do so."

"Nobody could have gone on better than Reuben, sir," I answered, "until his father came back three months ago."

I was looking at him as I said this, and I saw that he grew from his natural pallor to a ghastly white.

"Say that again."

"Until his father came back some three months ago—his father, Samuel Burton, who, I have heard say, was valet to your honour."

"Treacherous dog!" I heard him say to himself. And then aloud, "I suppose you do not know where this man Burton is, do you?"

"That is not very likely, sir, seeing that he was the leader in that very business for which poor Reuben has been took."

"Come," he said; "let us go back. Bring Reuben to me after it is all over."

When we got in again the case was on. It seemed so very sad and strange to me, I remember, to see poor Reuben in the dock; the moment I saw him there, I gave him up for lost. It appeared that a grand system of robbery had been going on for some time by a gang of men, some of whom were in the dock at present—that their head-quarters had been at a house in Law-

rence Street, kept by an Irish woman, Flanagan, now in custody, and a woman Bardolph, *alias* Tearsheet, *alias* Hobart Town Sall, still at large : and also in a garret at the top of the house known as Church Place, which was occupied by the prisoner Burton. The leader of the gang had been one Samuel Burton, *alias* Sydney Sam, not in custody ; the father of the prisoner Burton. The principal depôt for the stolen goods appeared to have been in Lawrence Street, (I thought of the loose boards, and trembled), for none had been found at Church Place, which seemed more to have been used as a lurking-place—the character of James Burton, the blacksmith, the occupier of the house, standing high enough to disarm suspicion. The prisoner Sykes, a desperate and notorious burglar and ruffian, had been convicted x times ; the prisoners Nym, Bardolph, and Pistol y times. There was no previous conviction against the prisoner Burton.

The other prisoners reserved their defence ; but Mr. Compton had procured for Reuben a small Jew gentleman, who now politely requested that Reuben might be immediately discharged from custody.

On what grounds the worthy magistrate would be glad to know.

“On the grounds,” burst out the little Jew gentleman, with blazing eyes and writhing lips, “that his sole and

only indiscretion was to give shelter, and house-room, and food, and hiding, to his own father; when that father came back, at the risk of his life, sixteen thousand miles, to set eyes on his handsome lad again once more before he died—came back to him a miserable, broken, ruined, desperate old convict. He ought not to have received him, you say. I allow it. It was grossly indiscreet for him to have shared his bed and his board with his poor old father. But it was not criminal. I defy you to twist the law of the land to such an extent as to make it criminal. I defy you to keep my client in that dock another ten minutes.”

The people in the court tried to cheer, but I was afraid of irritating the magistrate, and turned round saying, “Hush! Hush!” and then I saw that Sir George Hillyar was gone from beside me.

“The old fault, Mr. Marks,” said the quiet, good-natured magistrate to Reuben’s frantic little Jew gentleman. “Starting well and then going too far. If I had any temper left after twenty years on this bench, I might have answered your defiance by sending your client for trial. However, I have no temper; and, therefore, if you can call a respectable witness to character, I think that your client may be discharged.”

The little Jew gentleman was evidently puzzled here. His witnesses—I was one—were all to prove that

Reuben had not been at home for the last two months. As for witnesses to character, I imagine that he thought the less that was said about that the better. However, a Jew is never nonplussed (unless one Jew bowls down another's wicket, as in the case of Jacob and Esau); and so the little Jew lawyer erected himself on his tip-toes, and, to my immense admiration, and to the magistrate's infinite amusement, called out promptly, with a degree of impudence I never saw equalled, one of the greatest names in Chelsea.

There was subdued laughter all through the court. "The gravity of the bench was visibly disturbed," said the gentlemen of the flying pencils. But, before the rustle of laughter was subdued, our brave little Jew was on tip-toe again, with a scrap of paper in his hand, shouting out another name.

"Sir George Hillyar."

Sir George Hillyar, at the invitation of the worthy magistrate, walked quietly up, and took his seat on the bench. He was understood to say, "I am a magistrate in the colony of Cooksland, and still hold my appointment as Inspector of Police for the Bumbleoora district. The wretched man, Samuel Burton, whose name has been mentioned as leader of this gang of thieves, was once my valet. He robbed my late father, and was transported. The young man, Burton, the prisoner, his

son, is a most blameless and excellent young man, whose character is, in my opinion, beyond all suspicion. He was a great favourite with my late father; and I am much interested in his welfare myself. Beyond the criminal indiscretion of saving the man he calls his father from starvation, I doubt if there is anything which can be brought against him."

This clenched the business. Reuben was discharged, while the others were sent for trial. I was mad with joy, and fought my way out through the crowd to the little door by which I thought Reuben would come. I waited some time. First came out the little Jew gentleman, in a state of complacency, working his eyebrows up and down, and sucking his teeth. After him, by a long interval, Sir George Hillyar; whom I took the liberty to thank. But no Reuben.

Sir George stayed with me, and said he would wait till the young man came out. We waited some time, and during that time we talked.

"I suppose," said Sir George, "that Mr. Erne Hillyar has been to see you."

I told him that Erne had come to us on the evening next after the funeral—that he had been seized with a fever, had been at death's door, and was now getting slowly better.

"Well, then, I don't know that we need talk much

about him. If you are nursing him and taking care of him on the speculation of my ever relenting towards him, you are doing a very silly thing. If you are, as I suspect, doing it for love, I admire you for it ; but I swear to God, that, as far as I am concerned, you shall have no reward, further than the consciousness of doing a good action. He is quite unworthy of you. Is he going to die ? ”

“ No.”

“ Then he will marry your sister. And a devilish bad bargain she will make of it. I wonder where Reuben is.”

“ He must come soon, sir.”

“ I suppose so. I wish he would make haste. Mind you, you young blacksmith, I am not a good person myself, but I know there are such things ; and Compton says that you Burtons are good. I have no objection. But I warn you not to be taken in by Mr. Erne Hillyar, for of all the specious, handsome young dogs who ever walked the earth he is the worst. I wonder where Reuben can be.”

It was time to see. I was getting anxious to fight Erne’s battle with his brother ; but what can a blacksmith do with a baronet, without preparation ? I gave it up on this occasion, and went in to ask about Reuben.

I soon got my answer ; Reuben had gone, twenty

minutes before, by another door; we had missed him.

"He has gone home, sir, to our place," I said to Sir George; and so I parted from him. And, if you were to put me on the rack, I could not tell you whether I loved him or hated him. *You* will hate him, because I have only been able to give his words. But his manner very-nearly counterbalanced his words. Every sentence was spoken with a weary, worn effort; sometimes his voice would grow into a wrathful snarl, and it would then subside once more into the low, dreamy, distinct tone, in which he almost always spoke. I began to understand how he won his beautiful wife. A little attentive animation thrown into that cynically quiet manner of his—coming, too, from a man who, by his calm, contemptuous bearing, gave one, in spite of one's common sense, the notion that he was socially and intellectually miles above one—would be one of the highest compliments that any woman could receive.

But, when I got home, no Reuben was there. He did not come home that night, nor next day, nor for many days. Sir George Hillyar sent for me, and I had to tell him the fact. "He is ashamed to see my father after what has happened," I said. And Sir George said it was very vexing, but he supposed it must be so.

Still, days went on, and we heard nothing of him whatever.

Meanwhile Erne mended again rapidly. One day Mr. Compton had called to see him, and I heard my father and he talking together over Erne's affairs.

"It is curious," said Compton, "this spice of his father's unutterable obstinacy showing out in him just now, is it not. I never knew him obstinate before."

"Then you say," said my father, "that he is only poor by his own choice."

"Entirely. His father being intestate, he comes in for a certain share, for a share of money."

"And he won't touch it?"

"No. He has put it out of his power by a solemn oath. He says his hand is red with his brother's blood!"

CHAPTER XIII.

UNCLE BOB SURPRISES ERNE.

THERE is very little doubt that Emma would have done her duty better had she kept away from Erne altogether. It would have been fairer to him. She had prayed hard to my mother to be allowed a little, only a little more, of him, and my mother had, very wisely, refused it. Now, providence had given him back to her—had put the cup to her lips, as it were; and she, knowing her own strength—knowing by instinct that she had the power to stop when she pleased, and knowing also that, even if her own strength failed, the cup would be taken from her in a very few days—had drunk deeply. She had utterly given herself up to the pleasure of his presence, to the delight of to-day, refusing to see that the morrow of her own making must dawn sooner or later.

My mother and I thought that it was all over and done, and that there was no good in trying to stop matters in any way; and we were so far right. My

mother would gladly have stopped it: but what could she do?—circumstances were so much against her. Busy as she was, morning and night, she must either have left Erne, during his recovery, to take care of himself, or leave him and Emma alone a great deal together. She, as I said before, abandoned the whole business in despair. I was intensely anxious for the whole thing to go on; I saw no trouble in the way. I thought that Emma's often-expressed determination of devoting her whole life to poor Joe was merely a hastily-formed resolution, a rather absurd resolution, which a week in Erne's company would send to the winds. I encouraged their being together in every way. I knew they loved one another: therefore, I argued, they ought to make a match of it. That is all *I* had to say on the subject.

"God send us well out of it," said my mother to me one night.

"Why?" I answered. "It's all right."

"All right?" she retorted. "Sitting in the window together all the afternoon, with their hair touching;—all right! Lord forgive you for a booby, Jim!"

"Well!" I said, "what of that?—Martha and me sat so an hour yesterday, and you sat and see us. Now, then!"

"You and Martha aint Erne and Emma," said my mother, oracularly.

"You don't look me in the face, mother, and say that you distrust Erne?"

"Bless his handsome face—no!" said my mother, with sudden animation. "He is as true as steel—a sunbeam in the house. But, nevertheless, what I say is, Lord send us well out of it!"

I acquiesced in that prayer, though possibly in a different sense.

"You have power over her," resumed my mother. "You are the only one that has any power over her. Why don't you get her away from him?"

This I most positively refused to do.

"You'd better," said my mother, "unless you want her heart broke." And so she left me.

"Hammersmith, I want you," called out Erne, now almost convalescent, a short time afterwards; "I want you to come out with me. I want you to give me your arm, and help me as far as Kensington."

I agreed after a time, for he was hardly well enough yet. But he insisted that the business was important and urgent, and so we went. And, as we walked, he talked to me about his future prospects.

"You see, old boy, I haven't got a brass farthing in the world. I have nothing but the clothes and books you brought from Stanlake. And—I am not wicked: I forgive anything there may be to forgive, as I hope to

be forgiven—but I couldn't take the money from him." I had made my remonstrances on that before and had been stopped.

I now thought it my duty, now he was so much stronger, honestly to repeat the conversation Sir George had held with me, on the day when Reuben was discharged from custody.

"That is his temper, is it?" said Erne. "Well, God forgive him! To resume: I am hopelessly penniless."

I was forced to see that. I had my own plan, though I could not broach it.

"In the middle of which," said Erne, "comes this letter. Read it."

"MY DEAR NEPHEW, MR. ERNE,—From a generous communication received from the new and highly respected bart. in which my present munificent allowance is continued, I gather that differences, to which I will not further allude, have arisen between yourself and a worthy bart. whom it is unnecessary to mention by name. Unless I am misinformed, this temporary estrangement is combined with, if not in a great degree the cause of, pecuniary embarrassments. Under these circumstances, I beg to call your attention to the fact that I have now been living for many years on the bounty of your late father, and have saved a considerable sum of money. In case 500*l.* would be of any use to

you, I should rejoice in your acceptance thereof. I owe your late father more than that, as a mere matter of business. If agreeable to the feelings of all parties, a personal interview is requested.

“Your affectionate uncle,

“ROBERT HAWKINS.”

“Well, what do you think of that?”

“I think very well of your uncle, and I should take the money.”

“I *must*. But think of my disreputable old uncle, turning up at such a time as this. Do you know my father was always fond of him? I wonder what he is like! I have never seen him.”

“Didn’t you tell me he drank, sir?” I asked.

“Drink!” said Erne. “He has been drunk nineteen years.”

I was lost in the contemplation of such a gigantic spree, and was mentally comparing the case of Erne’s Uncle Bob with that of a young lady in Cambridgeshire, who had at that time, according to the Sunday papers, an ugly trick of sleeping for six or seven months at a stretch; and was thinking what a pity it was two such remarkable characters didn’t make a match of it, and live in a caravan; moreover, supposing them to have any family, what the propensities of that family would be—

whether they would take to the drinking or to the sleeping, or to both—concluding, that whichever they did they would be most valuable properties; in short, rambling on like my mother's own son: when we came to the house in Kensington, and were immediately admitted into the presence.

This mysterious Uncle Bob was a vast, square-shouldered, deep-chested giant of a man, who was even now, sodden with liquor as he was, really handsome. Erne had often told me that his mother had been very beautiful. Looking at this poor, lost, deboshed, dog of a fellow, I could readily understand it. Erne said he had been drunk nineteen years; if he hadn't told me that, I should have guessed five-and twenty.

Never having had any wits, he had not destroyed them by drinking; and having, I suppose, wound himself up for the interview by brandy or something else, he certainly acted as sensibly as could have been expected of him twenty years before. Besides, God had given this poor drunkard a kind heart; and certainly, with all his libations, he had not managed to wash *that* away. In our Father's house there are many mansions; I wonder if there is one for him!

At the time of his sister's marriage, he had just been raised to the dignity of underkeeper. Life had ceased with the poor fellow then. He was of an old family,

and the old rule, that the women of a family last two generations longer than the men, was proved true here. He had shown signs of the family decadence while his sister showed none. She had been vigorous, beautiful, and vivacious. He was also handsome, but unenergetic, with a tendency to bad legs, and a dislike for female society and public worship. Drink had come as a sort of revelation to him. He had got drunk, so to speak, on the spot, and had stayed so. His life had ceased just as he was raised to the dignity of cleaning Sir George Hillyar's first season guns, nineteen years before; and we found him, sitting before the fire, rubbing one of those very guns with a leather on this very afternoon.

He rose when we went in, and made a low bow to Erne, and then stood looking at him a few seconds. "You are very like your mother, sir," he said gently; "very like."

"My dear Uncle Bob," said Erne, "I am come according to appointment to speak to you about the noble and generous offer of yours."

"Do you accept it, sir?"

"I do most thankfully, my dear uncle. I would speak of it as a loan, but how can I dare do so? I have been brought up in useless luxury. I know nothing."

"You'll get on, sir. You'll get on fast enough," said the poor fellow, cheerfully. "Please come and see me

sometimes, sir. You're like my sister, sir. It does me good to hear your voice. Hers was a very pleasant one. We had a happy home of it in the old lodge, sir, before Sir George came and took her away. *I* saw what had happened the night he came into our lodge, after eight o'clock, and stood there asking questions, and staring at her with his lip a-trembling. *I* saw. *I* didn't think—let's see : *I* was talking about—. Ah ! Sam Burton knowing what he knew and not trading on it—no, not that,—*I* mean *I* hope you'll come and see me sometimes. If my head was to get clear, as it does at times, *I* could tell you all sorts of things."

"My dear Uncle, there is but small chance of our meeting for years. *I* am going to Australia."

"To Australia !" *I* bounced out, speaking for the first time.

"Certainly," said Erne ; " *I* can do nothing here. And, besides," he added, turning his radiant face on mine, " *I* found something out last night."

Poor Uncle Bob gave Erne a pocketbook, and, after many affectionate farewells, we departed. *I* was very thoughtful all the way home. • "Found something out last night !" Could it be all as *I* wished ?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST OF THE CHURCHYARD.

"AND so it is really true that the ship sails this day week, Emma?" said Erne Hillyar to Emma Burton, laughing. "Matters are coming to a crisis now, hey?"

"Yes, they are coming to a crisis," said Emma quietly. "Only one week more."

"Only one week more of old England," said Erne, "and then four months of wandering waves."

"It will soon be over," said Emma.

"Oh, very soon," said Erne. "They tell me that the voyage passes like a peaceful dream. There are some who sail and sail on the sea for very sailing's sake, and would sail on for ever. The old Greeks feared and wearied of the sea. We English love it as our mother. Yes, I think there are some of us who would love to live at sea."

"They leave their cares on shore," said Emma.

"They are like you and me, Emma. They have no cares."

"Have we none?"

"I have none. I leave everything humbly in the hands of God. I have been a great sinner, but He has forgiven me. He has been very merciful, Emma."

"I hope He will have mercy. I hope He will lay no burden on any of us greater than we can bear. But, at all events, they say that duty and diligence will carry one through all."

"You are disturbed and anxious, Emma, at this breaking up of old associations. Come with me. Let us walk together down to the old churchyard : it will be the last time for many years—possibly for ever."

"Yes, I will come with you. It will be for the last time for ever. Let us come."

So they two went down together to the old churchyard, and stood in the old place together, looking over the low wall on to the river. The summer evening was gathering glory before it slept and became night. And beyond the bridge, westward, the water and the air above were one indistinguishable blaze of crimson splendour. At their feet the tide was rushing and swirling down to the sea.

They were quite alone,—in perfect solitude among the tombs. Erne was standing, as of old, on the grave of

the Hillyar girl, so often mentioned before ; and Emma was beside him, touching him, but looking away, across the sweeping river.

And so they stood silent for a long while. How long ? Who measures lovers' time ? Who can say ? But the sun was dead, and only a few golden spangles of cloud were blazing high aloft in the west, when Emma felt that Erne had turned, and was looking at her. And then her heart beat fast, and she wished she was dead, and it was all over. And she heard him say, with his breath on her cheek—

“What beautiful hair you have !”

“Yes.”

“Here is a long tress fallen down over your shoulder. May I loop it up ?”

“Yes.”

“May I kiss you ?”

“Yes ; it will soon be over.”

“My darling—my own beautiful bird !”

There was no answer to this, but a short sob, which was followed by silence. Then Erne drew her closer to him, and spoke in that low, murmuring whisper, which Adam invented one morning in Eden.

“Why have we deferred this happy moment so long, Emma ? How long have we loved one another ? From the very beginning ?”

"Yes, I think it was from the very beginning."

"Are you happy?"

"Quite happy. Are you happy, dear?"

"Surely, my own," said Erne. "Why should I not be?"

"Then let us be happy this one week, Erne. It is not long. God surely will not begrudge us one week; life is very long."

So they stood and talked till dusk grew into darkness upon the poor cripple girl's grave. And she lay peacefully asleep, nor turned upon her bed, nor rose up in her grave-clothes, to scare her kinsman from his danger.

The next day was dark and wild, and he was up and away early, to take the last headlong step. His friend, James Burton, went with him, and Erne took passage in the same ship by which the Burtons were going.

It was a busy, happy day. There were many things for Erne to buy, of which he knew nothing, and his humble friend had to assist him in fifty ways. At intervals of business Erne found time to tell Jim everything, and that worthy lad was made thoroughly happy by the news. They were together all day in the driving rain, scarcely noticing that it blew hard till they got on board ship, and then they heard it moaning melancholy aloft among the spars and cordage, telling of wild weather on the distant sea.

At evening it held up ; and Erne coming home, missed Emma, and followed her down to the churchyard. It was a very different evening from the last : low clouds were hurrying swiftly along overhead, and far in the westward a golden bar, scarcely above the horizon, showed where the sun was setting ; and, as they looked at it, grew dark once more.

"Emma, my love, it is done."

"What is done?"

"I have taken passage in the same ship with you."

Was it a moan or a cry that she gave? Did it mean joy, or sorrow, or terror? He soon knew, although it was too dark to see her face.

"Don't kill me, Erne, by saying that! Don't tell me that you've been such a madman!"

"My darling, what do you mean?"

"Keep your hand from me, Erne. Do not kiss me. Do not come near me."

"Emma, what is the matter?"

"It is not too late, Erne," she said, kneeling down on the wet tombstone. "If you ever loved me—if you have any mercy on me, or on yourself—don't carry out this intention."

"In Heaven's name why, my love?"

"If I had not thought that we were to part for ever and ever, inexorably, at the end of this week, I could

have stopped you in a thousand ways. But I thought that surely I might have one single week of happiness with you, before we parted never to meet again."

"Why are we to part?"

"I have devoted my whole life to one single object, and nothing must ever interfere with it. I have made a solemn vow before heaven that nothing ever shall. I allowed myself to love you before I knew the full importance of that object. Even in the old times I saw that I must give you up for duty; and lately that duty has become ten times more imperative than ever. Judge what hope there is for us."

Erne stood silent a moment.

"Speak to me! Curse me! Don't stand silent! I know well how wicked I have been, but think of my punishment—"

"Hush! my darling. You are only dearer to me than ever. Hush! and come here, once more—for the last time if you will, but come."

"Only for one moment. Will you do as I ask you? You will not come with us?"

"I will see. I want to ask you something. Did you think that I was going to part from you at the week's end as if nothing had passed? Could you think so of me? Were you mad, my own?"

"Yes, I was mad—wicked and mad. I did not know. I did not think. I *would* not think."

"And do you think I can give you up so lightly now? I *will* not. I swear it—will not."

He felt her tremble on his arm, but she said quietly, "You must let me go. We must never talk to one another like this again. It is all my fault, I know, I have no one to blame but my wicked self. Good-bye, Erne."

"If you choose to carry out your resolution, you shall do so; but I will be by your side. I will never leave you. I will follow you everywhere. I will wait as long as you will, but I will never give you up."

"God's will be done," she said. "If you will make my trial harder, I can only say that I have deserved it. We must come home, Mr. Hillyar."

"Emma!"

"I have called you Erne for the last time," she said, and walked on.

That night the poor girl lay sobbing wildly in bed hour after hour—not the less wildly because she tried to subdue her sobs for fear of awakening her sleeping little bed-fellow, Fred. Shame at the licence she had allowed Erne, meaning as she did to part with him; remorse for the pain she had inflicted on him; blind terror for the future; and, above all, an obstinate

adherence to her resolution, which her own heart told her nothing could ever shake—these four passions—sometimes separately, sometimes combined—tore her poor little heart so terribly, that she hoped it was going to burst, and leave her at rest.

In the middle of the night, in one of the lulls between her gusts of passion—lulls which, by God's mercy, were becoming more and more frequent; when the wild wind outside had died into stillness, and the whole house was quiet; when there was no sound except the gentle breathing of the child by her side, and no movement except its breath upon her cheek—at such time the door was opened, and some one came in with a light. She looked round and said—

“Mother!”

The big, hard-featured blacksmith's wife came to the bedside, and sat upon it, drawing her daughter to her bosom. She said, “Emma dear, tell mother all about it.”

“Kiss me then, mother, and tell me I am forgiven.”

“You know you are forgiven, my daughter.”

“I never meant to have him, mother. I always loved him; you know that; but I had vowed my life to poor Joe, before ever I saw him. You know you told me to give him up, and I did. I only asked for one more day of him; you remember that.”

"And I forbade it."

"You were right and wise, dear. But then he came here in his trouble; and then, dear," she continued, turning her innocent, beautiful face up to her mother's, "I loved him dearer than ever."

"I know that, of course. I don't know what I could have done. Go on, and tell me what has happened now."

"Why, knowing that we were to part for ever at the end of the week"—here her voice sank to a whisper—"I let him tell me he loved me; and I told him I loved him. Oh, my God! I only wanted one week of him—one week out of all the weary, long eternity. Was that so very wicked?"

"You have been wrong, my darling: you have been very, very wrong. You must go on to the end; you must tell me what happened to-night."

"To-night? To-night? In the churchyard? Yes, I can tell you what happened there well enough. I am not likely to forget that. He told me that, so far from our being separated for ever, he had taken passage in the same ship with us, and was going to follow me to the world's end."

"And what did you do?"

"I knelt and asked his forgiveness, and then cast him off for ever."

Poor Mrs. Burton sank on her knees on the floor, and looked up into her daughter's face.

"Emma! Emma! Can you forgive your wicked old mother?"

"Forgive *you*! I, who have dragged our good name through the dust! I, who have let a man I never meant to marry kiss my cheek! *I* forgive you?"

"Yes, my pure, innocent angel—for so you are—your poor old mother asks your forgiveness on her knees. I might have prevented all this. I broke it off once, as you remember; but when he came back, I let it all go on, just as if I wasn't responsible. I thought it was Providence had sent him back. I thought I saw God's hand in it."

"God's hand *is* in it," said Emma.

"And Jim was so fierce about it; and I am so afraid of Jim. He wants you to marry Erne; and I thought it might be for the best; but I see other things now. Are you afraid of Jim?"

"Yes; what will he say about this?" said Emma.

"He will be very angry. He must never know."

"Erne will tell him."

"Is there no chance of your relenting about Erne Hillyar?" said Mrs. Burton, in a whisper.

"You know me, mother, and you know there is none; I should drag him down."

Then you must go on with your duty, my child. If you die, dear—if God takes you to His bosom and lets you rest there—you must go on with your duty. Emma, I will give you strength. He would never be happy with you for long, unless he lowered himself to our level; and would you wish him to do that? He is one to rise in the world, and we, with our coarse manners and our poverty, would only be a clog round his neck. I love him for loving you; but remember what he is, and think what a partner he should have. You see your duty to him and to Joe. If the waves of the great, cruel sea we are going to cross rise up and overwhelm us, let your last thought before your death be that you had been true to duty."

CHAPTER XV.

EMMA'S WORK BEGINS.

It was the next night after her parting with Erne in the churchyard that poor Emma's ministrations began.

It had been a weary day for her. She had tried hard to lose thought in work, but she had succeeded but poorly even in the midst of the bustle of preparation; and now, when she was sitting alone in the silent room, with Joe moping and brooding, with his head on his hands, before her—refusing to speak, refusing to go to bed—her trouble came on her stronger than ever; and, with a feeling nearly like despair, she recalled the happy happy hour she had passed with Erne in the churchyard only two days ago, and saw before her, in the person of poor Joe, brooding sullenly over the dying fire, her life's work—the hideous fate to which she had condemned herself in her fanaticism.

Erne and Jim had come in twice that day. They both looked very sad, and only spoke commonplaces to

her. She saw that Erne had told Jim everything, and she trembled. But, Jim and she being left alone for one moment, Jim had come solemnly up and kissed her; and then she had suddenly cast her arms round his neck, and blessed him, in God's name, for not being angry with her. He had kissed her again sadly, and left her.

And now the work was all done, and the children were in bed; and she would gladly have been in bed too, with Fred's balmy child's breath fanning her to sleep. But there was poor Joe brooding with his head in his hands.

At last he looked up. "Emma, my love," he said gently, "go to bed, dear. You are tired."

"To bed," she said, "my old Joe; why, it's only half-past nine. Here's ever so much to do to these old shirts of Jim's; burnt all into holes in the arms with the forge sparks, just like father's. And Martha, she's put the children to bed. I don't think I shall go to bed for another hour, bless you. Let's sit and talk."

"I wish I was in my grave," said Joe. "I wish I had killed myself when I fell off that ladder."

"Why, dear?" said Emma, looking at him earnestly.

"Because I am shipwrecked and lost. God has only allowed me to exist hitherto, because I developed the beautiful unselfish love of my brothers and sisters.

Why, you all love me as well as if I was not the loathsome object I am."

"Joe, how dare you! I will not have it! You know you are not loathsome; and who knows better than yourself that your abilities are first-rate?"

"Ay! ay!" said Joe. "But a man with my hideous affliction don't get two such chances. I know. People like looking on handsome and beautiful things, if they can. No man would have such an unhappy monster as I am near him, if he could have something in the shape of a human being. I don't blame them. I don't rebel against God. I only know that my career is over."

"Joe! Joe! what are you talking of? Why, Joe, you have a head like Lord Byron's. Who knows better than Erne Hillyar? You are the handsomest of the family, in spite of your poor dear back."

"I love you and Jim the better for flattering me; but my eyes are opened."

"Have you fallen in love with any one? Come, tell your own sister. Let her share your trouble, Joe."

"No, it's not that I was thinking of. I don't care for any woman but you. That Mrs. George Hillyar, Lady Hillyar, I should say—"

"Have you fallen in love with *her*, dear?" said Emma eagerly.

"Curse her! I hate her, the frivolous idiot. She gave

me the bitterest insult I have ever had. When I first went there, I came suddenly on her in the library, and she ran away screaming, and locked herself in the nursery with the baby."

"I should like to knock her silly little head off her impudent little shoulders," said Emma with a bounce, stitching away at Jim's shirt, as if each click of the needle was a dig into poor Gerty's eyes. "But come, Joe, that ain't what's the matter. What's the matter is this. You thought you were going to be a great public man, and so on; and you've had a temporary disappointment. Only don't go and look me in the face, and tell me that your personal appearance is going to begin to trouble you at this time of day; because, if you do, I shan't believe you. And, as for Lady Hillyar, she may be a very good judge of blacks (among whom she has been brought up, and has apparently copied her manners from); but she is none of whites, or she wouldn't have married that most ill-looking gentleman, Sir George. I say, Joe, dear."

"Well, Em," said Joe, with something like a laugh.

"Is there any parliament in Cooksland now?" said Emma.

"Yes," said Joe, getting interested at once. "Yes, two Houses. Council, sixteen members, nominated by the Crown for life; Lower House or Assembly, thirty

members, elected by universal suffrage of tax-payers. Property qualification, 300 acres under cultivation, or 2,000*l.*."

"Then there you are. What is to hinder *you* from a career? Lord bless me! why, it seems to me that you have made a change for the better. Career indeed!" And so she went on for half an hour, getting from him the political statistics of the colony, and shaping out his political conduct, until she suddenly turned on him, and insisted on his talking no more, but going to bed; and she had her reward, for he kissed her, and went upstairs with a brighter look on his handsome face than had been there for weeks.

She had hardly seen him out of the room, and had come back with the intention of folding up Jim's shirt and going to bed, when she started, for there was a low knock at the door.

She listened. She heard Joe lumbering up to bed, and, while she held her breath, the knocking came again a little louder.

It was at the house door. She crossed the wide dark hall which lay between the sitting-room and that door, and laid her ear against it. As she did so the knocking was repeated more impatiently. She said in a low voice, very eagerly, "Reuben?"

A shrill whisper from the other side said, "Blow

Reuben. I wish Reuben had six months in a cook's shop with a muzzle on, for this here night's work. Keeping a cove hanging about a crib as has been blow'd on, with the traps a lurking about in all directions. Is that Emma?"

"Yes," she said.

"I knowed it were," said the other party, in a triumphant tone. "Young woman, young woman, open that there door. I won't hurt you. I won't even so much as kiss you, without consent freely given, and all parties agreeable."

Emma, who had a pretty good notion of taking care of herself, and was as well able to do it as any lady of our editorial acquaintance, opened the door and looked out. Looking out was no good; but, hearing something make a click with its tongue about the level of her knees, she looked down, and saw below her a very small boy of the Jewish persuasion, with a curly head, apparently about nine years old, and certainly under four feet high.

Her first idea was that he was the son and heir of the little Jew gentleman described to her by Jim as having defended Reuben; and that he had been sent by his father with the bill. She was quite mistaken; there was no connexion between the two, save a common relationship with Abraham. Considering it necessary

to say something, and feeling it safer to confine herself to polite commonplaces, she said that she was very sorry indeed to say that her father was gone to bed ; but that, if he would be so good as to look round in the morning she would feel obliged to him.

The little Jew, who, if it had not been for his beautiful eyes, hair, and complexion, would have reminded you most forcibly of a baby-pike, about two ounces in weight, turned his handsome little head on one side, and smiled on Emma amorously. Then he winked ; then he took a letter from behind his back, and held it before his mouth while he coughed mysteriously ; then he put the letter behind him once more, and waltzed, with amazing grace and activity, for full ten bars.

"You're a funny boy," said Emma. "If that letter is for me, you'd better take and hand it over. If it aint, you'd best take and hook it ; and so I don't deceive you ; because I aint going to be kep here all night with your acting. If I want to see monkeys I go to the Zellogical. There is some pretty ones *there*."

The small Israelite was not in the least offended. "I'm an admirer of yourn," he said. "I've gone and fallen in love with you at first sight ; that's about what I've took and done. I am enamoured of your person, I tell you. You're a fine-built girl. You're crumby ; I don't go to deny that ; but there's not too much on it

yet. Confine yourself to a vegetable diet, and take horse exercise regular, and you'll never be what any man of taste would call fat. Come, it's no use beating about the bush; I want a kiss for this 'ere letter."

"You little ape," said Emma. "Who do you think is going to kiss *you*?"

"Why, you are, unless I mistake," replied the boy. "Just one. Come on; you can't help yourself. I always were partial to your style of beauty ever since I growed up. Come, give it to us, unless I'm to come and take it."

At this point of the conference, Emma, with a rapid dexterity, which not only took the Jew child utterly by surprise, but which ever after was a source of astonishment and admiration to Emma herself and all her friends, made a dive at him, knocked his cap off, got her fingers in his hair, and took the letter from him before he had time to get his breath. She turned on the threshold flushed with victory, and said, "*I'll* kiss you, you little Judas! With pepper! my Barney! Oh yes, with capsicums!"

She slammed the door in the pretty little rogue's face, and tore the letter open. She had guessed, as has possibly the reader, that it was from Reuben. It was this which made her so eager to get it. It was this which made her lose her temper at his nonsensical

delay, and use for a minute or two language which, though most familiar to her ear, was utterly unfamiliar to her mouth.

The letter, given below, took about two minutes to read. In about two more she had caught down her bonnet and shawl, had blown out the candle, had silently opened the front door, had looked round, had slipped out and shut it after her, and then, keeping on the south side of Brown's Row, had crossed Church Street, and set herself to watch the Black Lion.

Meanwhile there is just time to read the letter.

"DEAREST EMMA—Although I have gone to the dogs utterly, and without any hope at all of getting away from them any more, I should like to tell you, and for you to tell Jim, and for him to tell Master Erne and the kids, as they were all the same to me as ever, although I must never see nor speak to any of them never any more.

"I'm lost, old girl. Tell your father that I humbly pray his forgiveness for the sorrow I have brought on him. I know how wild he must be with me. He was a kind and good friend to me, and I wish I had been struck dead before I brought this trouble upon him.

"I've gone regularly to the devil now, old girl. Nothing can't save me now. I haint *done* nothing

yet ;—that's coming, to-night may be—or I shouldn't have the cheek to write to you. Kiss the kids all round for me, and tell 'em as poor Reuben's dead and gone, and will never see 'em any more. You'd better say, old girl, that he was drowned last Tuesday, opposite the Vice-Chancellor's, a-training, and lies buried in Putney Churchyard. Something of that sort will look ship-shape.

“ Good-bye, old girl, for ever. Don't forget that there *were* such a chap ; and that he was very fond of you all, though he was a nuisance.

“ REUBEN.”

CHAPTER XVI.

EMMA ASTONISHES A GOOD MANY PEOPLE : THE MEMBERS
OF HER FAMILY IN PARTICULAR.

EMMA saw the Jew-boy go into the public-house, and saw what went on there. The boy had no business in there ; he did not call for anything, he merely went in as a polite attention to the company. There was a water-filter on the bar, the tap of which he sat running on to the floor, and then stood and laughed at it. Upon this the barmaid ran out of the bar to box his ears, and he dodged her and ran *into* the bar, shutting the gate behind him, and contrived to finish a pint of ale before she could get at him ; and, when she did, he lay down in a corner, and refused to move, or to do anything but use language calculated to provoke a breach of the peace. She slapped him and she kicked him ; but there he lay, all the company laughing at her, till at last the policeman made his appearance, and all *he*

could do was to get hold of him by one leg, and drag him out on his back, with all his beautiful curls trailing in the sawdust, showing about as much care or life as a dead dog. There was nothing to do but to drag him outside, and let him lie on the pavement. When the policeman let go his leg, he managed to drop the heel of his boot with amazing force on to the policeman's toe; after which he lay for dead again.

"Whatever shall I do?" thought poor Emma. "If they lock him up, whatever shall I do?"

The landlord and the policeman stood looking at him. "Did *you* ever see such a little devil?" said the landlord.

"Never such a one as *he*. Shall I lock him up?"

"Lord bless you, no," said the landlord; "let the poor little monkey be. Good-night." And so the policeman departed round the corner.

Emma was very much relieved by this. They left the boy alone; and then, like a fox who has been shamming dead, he moved his head slightly. Then he raised it cautiously, and, seeing he was really alone, suddenly started up, gave a wild yell, and darted off like lightning up Church Street, at one minute in the road, in another on the pavement; and away started poor Emma after him, with as much chance of catching him as she would have had with a hare.

Fortunately for her quest, as she came into the King's Road she ran straight against the policeman, who said, with alarm and astonishment, "Miss Burton!"

"Yes. Don't delay me, for God's sake. Have you seen a little Jew boy running?"

"Lord, yes, Miss," he answered, laughing. "He came flying round here like a mad dog; and, when he see me, he gave a screech that went right through your head, and cut in behind they Oakley Square railings; and there he is now."

"Is he mad?" said Emma.

"No," said the policeman. "He's skylarking; that's what he's up to, after the manner of his nation."

"It's a very extraordinary and lunatic way of skylarking," said Emma. "I have got to follow him. Go home and wake Jim, and tell him where and how you saw me."

"Take care, miss, for God's sake."

"Yes, yes; see, there he comes creeping out. Go and tell Jim. I hope he won't run. Good-night."

The little Jew did not run. He began thinking what he would do next. He came to the conclusion that he would waltz, and he put his resolution into immediate execution, and waltzed up the King's Parade. But he did even this like some one possessed with evil spirits, who took every opportunity of getting the upper hand.

Faster and more furious grew the boy's dancing each moment, more like the spin of a whirling Dervish, or the horrible dance in *Vathek*. The wildest Carmagnole dancer on the second of September would have confessed himself outdone in barbaric fury; and the few belated passengers turned and looked on with something like awe; and Emma began to fancy that she was being lured to her destruction by some fantastic devil.

The poor little man had been mewed up for weeks, and all the intense vivacity of his race was breaking out, and taking the form of these strange weird tricks—tricks which in, say a Teutonic child, would have been clear evidence of madness, but which were simply natural in a child of that wondrous, indestructible, unalterable race to which he belonged. A French girl would have been merely amused with them; but Emma, a thorough English girl, with the peculiarly English habit of judging all things in heaven and earth by the English standard, was frightened; and her fright took the thoroughly English form of obstinate anger, and nerved her to her task. “The little wretch; I will be even with him.”

So she went on, eager and determined, with her eyes and her mind so concentrated on the strange little figure, that she never exactly knew where she went. The child lurked, and dodged, and ran, and dawdled, and shouted,

and sang, till nothing which he could have done would have surprised her ; and she found herself getting into a chronic state of expectation as to what he would do next.

Once again everything was nearly going wrong. The boy set off on one of his runs, and ran swiftly round a corner, and she ran round too, for fear of losing sight of him ; and at the corner she met him coming back again, walking slowly, with his hands in his pockets, whistling. But he did not recognise her. He asked her how her uncle Benjamin was to-night, and told her that Bill had waited there for her till ten, but had gone off in the sulks, and was going to take her sister Sally to Hampton Court in a van, to feed the gold-fish with peppermint lozenges ; but he did not recognise her, and she was thankful for it.

At last, when and where she cannot tell, they came into more crowded streets ; and here the young gentleman displayed a new form of vivacity, and began to play at a new game, infinitely more disconcerting than any of his other escapades. This game was trying to get run over. He would suddenly dart out into the street under the very hoofs of the fastest going cab-horse that he could see. If he could get the cabman to pull up, he would stand in the street and enter into a personal altercation with him, in which—he being a

Jew, and the cabman, nominally at least, being a Christian—he always got the best of it. If the cab did not pull up, he dodged out of the way and tried another. This being an amusement which consumed a great deal of time, and the collection of no less than two crowds, from the second and largest of which he was walked out by a policeman in strict custody, poor Emma's heart failed her, and she began to weep bitterly.

But her "pluck" (a good word, though a vulgar one) never gave way. She determined to follow him to the station, see him in safe custody, and then confide the whole truth to the inspector, be the consequences what they might. It was lucky that there was no necessity for such a ruinous course of proceeding.

She was following close on the heels of the boy and the policeman, when she heard this dialogue:—

"I am very sorry, sir. I was running after a young man as has owed me a joey since the last blessed Greenwich fair, as ever dawned on this wicked world."

"Don't tell me: didn't I see you playing your antics all up the Cut, bobbing in and out among the horses, you young lunatic? *I'll* shake you." And he did; and the boy wept the wild, heart-rending tears of remorse, rather more naturally than nature.

"Look here. If I let you go, will you go home?"

"Strike me blind if I don't, sir. Come, I really will,

you know. Honour. I've had my spree, and I want to get home. Do let me go. I shall catch it so owdacious if I aint home soon. Come."

"There you are, then. Stow your games now. There, cut away, you monkey."

The boy played no more antics after this ; he seemed to have been sobered by his last escape. He held so steadily homewards, that Emma, without any notion where she was, or where she was going, found herself opposite a low public-house, before which the boy paused.

He did not go in, but went to a door adjoining, and knocked with his knuckles. After a few minutes, the door was opened as far as the chain would allow it, and some one inside said, "Now then?"

"Nicnicabarlah," was what the boy answered.

Emma, listening eagerly, caught the word correctly, and repeated it two or three times to herself, after the boy had slipped in, and the door was shut behind him. What a strange, wicked-sounding word! Could there be any unknown, nameless sin in repeating it? There were strange tales about these Jews, and this particular one was undoubtedly possessed by one devil at least, if not a dozen. A weird word, indeed!

So she thought about it now. But, afterwards, in the Sabbath of her life, the word became very familiar and

very dear to her, and represented a far different train of ideas. Now it was the name, the formula, of some unknown iniquity: hereafter, when she understood everything, she smiled to know that the wicked word was only the native name for a soaring, solitary, flame-worn crag—the last left turret in the ruin of a great volcano—in the far-off land of hope to which they were bound. One of the first and greatest wonders in the new land was to see the peak of Nicnicabarlah catch the sun, and blaze like a new and more beautiful star in the bosom of the morning.

That strange word, had she known all she did afterwards, would have told her that Somebody was in those parts; but now she knocked at the door in ignorance, and it being demanded of her, "what the office was," she pronounced the horrid word in her desperation; at imminent risk, as she half believed, of raising the devil. The only present effect of it was that she was admitted into a pitch-dark passage, by something which Emma, using the only sense available, concluded to be a young woman of untidy habits; as, indeed, it was.

"I want Reuben Burton, if you please," said Emma, in the dark, with the coolest self-possession.

"You're his young woman, aint you?" said the untidy one.

Emma said, "Yes."

"Who give you the office?" said the untidy one.

"Who could it have been but one?"

"Of course, it was Ben," said the untidy one. "But don't tell on him, young woman. He'll be torn to pieces, if you do. And he aint a bad 'un, aint Ben."

Emma promised she wouldn't, and once more asked to see Reuben.

The untidy one led her through a very, very long passage, in pitch darkness, at the end of which she by no means reassured Emma by telling her that there were nine steps to go down, and that she had better mind her head! However, she went down in safety, and was shown into a rather comfortable, cellar-like room, with a brick floor, in which there were lights and a good fire, before which sat Master Ben, the insane young Jew child possessed of the seven devils, warming himself.

He turned and recognised her at once. For one instant there was a sudden *flash*—I mean an instantaneous expression (I can explain myself no better)—of angry astonishment on his handsome little face. Though it was gone directly, it was wonderfully visible, as passion is apt to be on Jewish faces. The moment after it had passed, he looked at her lazily, winked, and said,

"Don't make love to me before *her*"—jerking his

thumb at the untidy one, who in the light was more untidy than Emma had even anticipated from what she gathered in the dark—"she's enamoured of me, she is. It aint reciprocal though it may be flattering. I never give her no encouragement; so you can't blame me. It's one of those sort of things that a man of my personal appearance must put up with. I regret it, for the young woman's sake, but wash my hands of the consequences."

The "young woman," who was old enough to be his mother, and looked old enough to be his grandmother, laughed and departed, and Emma heard her bawling to some one, to know if Chelsea Bob was in the way.

The moment she was gone, the child Ben jumped on his feet, and, looking eagerly at Emma, said, "In God's name, how did you get here?"

"I followed you all the way," said Emma, with calm composure. "I heard the word you gave, and, Lord forgive me! said it myself at the door. And here I am."

"Young woman, you're mad! You don't know where you are. I can't tell you. Quick! they'll be here in a moment. I will let you out. Quick!—it will be too late in one minute."

"I'll never leave this house alive, without Reuben," was Emma's quiet answer. And as she gave it, she

was conscious that the bawling after "Chelsea Bob" had ceased almost as soon as it had begun, and there was a dead silence.

"Lord of Moses!" said little Ben, clutching wildly at his hair—"she'll drive me mad! Emma!—girl!—young woman!—will you be sane? I'll let you out, if you'll go. If you don't go this instant, you'll never go alive, I tell you. I like you. I like your face and your way, and I like Reuben, and came down all the way to Chelsea to-night for goodwill towards him. I'll get him out of this for you. I'll do anything for you, if you'll only clear. I shall be half-murdered for it, but I'll do it. You're among Levison's lot, I tell you. Coiners; you understand that. No one leaves here alive. You understand that. It will be too late directly."

It was too late already, it appeared. Two men were in the room, and three women, including the untidy one, who might now, in comparison with the two others, have made good her claim to a rather exceptional neatness of attire and cleanliness of person. The battle began by one of the men striking poor little Ben with his whole strength on the side of his head, and sending him against the bars of the fireplace, from which he fell stunned and motionless. The girl who had let Emma in, went and picked him up, and kissed him, and held

him in her arms like a child, scowling all the time savagely at Emma.

"You cowardly brute," cried Emma, in full defiance, drawing herself up until she looked as big as her mother—"striking a child like that! I want my cousin Reuben. Reuben! Reuben!"

She said this so loud, that the man who had struck the child said quickly, "Collar her!" But she was on one side of the table and they on the other; and before they had time to get round, she stopped them by saying, "I'll put a knife in the heart of any one that comes near me. Mind that! Reuben—Reuben! Help!"

The pause was only instantaneous. They saw that she had no knife, and rushed on her. But her cries had not been in vain. One of the men had just seized her, and was holding his hand over her mouth, when he received a staggering blow on his ear, which he remembered for a long while, about ten times harder than the one he had given to poor plucky little Ben; and a hoarse voice, belonging to the person who had given the blow, said, with perfect equanimity—

"What's up here? what's up? what's up? Hands off in manners. I won't have no girls fisted in this house."

One of the untidy young ladies was beginning to remark that she liked that; and that it was pleasing to find that they was to be overrode in their own crib by

Chelsea roughs as was kept dark out of charity, when she was interrupted by Emma casting herself at the feet of the woman who had struck the blow, and crying out—

“Mrs. Bardolph!—help me! Dear Mrs. Bardolph, when I read the good words to you in your fever, you said you would never forget me. Help me now!”

And then that terrible woman, so hideous, so fierce, so reckless—the woman who had been steeped in infamy from her girlhood; the woman whose past was a catalogue of crimes, whose future seemed a hopeless hell; the woman who had never forgotten God, because she had never known Him; who had never repented, because evil had been her good from childhood; this savage, unsexed termagant now bent down over poor Emma, and said, in a voice of terror—“My God! it’s Miss Burton! Emma Burton, I would sooner have been dead than see you here. Oh, I would sooner have been dead than seen this. Oh, Miss Burton! Miss Burton! what has brought you to this evil den?”

“I have come after my cousin Reuben. I have come to save him. He is innocent, for he told me so, and he never deceived me. Mrs. Bardolph, you must die some day; don’t die with this sin on your mind. Don’t lend your help to ruin an innocent young man, who never harmed you. Let me see him, and I will persuade him

to come away with me, and we will bless your name as long as we live."

Mrs. Bardolph, *née* Tearsheet, turned to one who stood beside her, and said, "Come, you know what I told you. Decide. Let him go." And Emma turned, too, and for the first time saw her cousin Samuel.

She did not know him. She did not even guess who this strange, long-nosed man, with the satanic eyebrows, and his mouth close up under his nostrils, could be. She only saw that he was the most remarkable-looking person present, and, though he looked like a great scoundrel, yet still there was a certain air of refinement about him ; so she turned to him—

"Come, sir. You are an old man. Your account will soon be rendered. You have power here ; you will not use it against this poor young man's soul. I see you are yielding, by your eyes," she went on, taking his hand. "Dear sir, you must have had a son of your own once ; for his sake help me to save my cousin."

"If you take away your cousin, Emma, you take away my son, and leave me all alone."

She knew who he was now.

"Cousin ! Cousin Samuel, come with him. It is never too late. Cousin, there is time yet to lead a good life in a new country, with Reuben by your side. Let us three leave here to-night together, cousin, and set

our backs for ever to all this evil and this forgetfulness of God. Come, cousin."

"*I can never go, my poor child,*" said the convict. "And, even if I let Reuben go (for he'd stay by me through everything), I lose my only son for ever."

"Not for ever. Why for ever? Raise yourself to his level, and don't seek to drag him down to yours. There is good in your heart yet, cousin; for your hand trembles as I speak. Hah! I have conquered. Oh, thank God! I have conquered!"

So she had. Samuel Burton drew her arm through his, and led her away, while the others stood silent. Emma saw she had been right in appealing to him; he was evidently a man of authority. There was little doubt, from the deference which was shown him by the others, that he was by far the greatest rogue in the house.

He led her up stairs, through a different way from that by which she had come in; and she found herself in a parlour, one side of which was of glass, beyond which was evidently the bar, for she heard the drinkers talking; and in this parlour there was no one but Reuben, fast asleep on a settle.

"Go up and speak to him," said Samuel, in a whisper.

Emma went up and shook him by the shoulder.

"Reuben, dear," she said, "get up and come home. Jim and Joe's a sitting up waiting for you; and father, he wants to see you before he goes to bed. Look sharp."

Reuben rose up, and looked at her sleepily. "Why, Emma, old girl," he said, "I thought I was at the Cross Keys! So I am, by gad! How did you come here?"

"I came after you. Look sharp."

Reuben looked again in wonder, and saw Samuel Burton. "Father," he said, "am I to go back there?"

"Yes, Reuben. Go back with her—go back, and don't come here any more."

"Are you coming?" said Reuben.

"Not I, my boy. We must part for the present. Go with her. Say good-bye to me, and go."

"Why? I don't want to desert you, father. Emma aint the girl to advise a man to pitch his own father overboard; more particularly, as in the present case, on the top of a strong ebb-tide, with the wind west, and a deal more land water coming down after the late rains, or else I'm no waterman. Emma aint here to-night to tell me to cut the only rope that holds my own father to the hope of better things: not if she's the young woman I take her for, she aint."

And so well did poor Reuben put his case, that

Emma, for a moment, thought she wasn't. But Samuel Burton came in on the right side, with one of those facile lies which had grown from long practice to be far more easy to him than the truth.

"I tell you, boy, that you must go with her. Your presence here endangers both of us. She has tracked you here to-night, and the traps are not far off, as your sense will tell you. There are not two safe minutes left to say good-bye—"

Here Emma, with an instinct of good breeding which would have done honour to any lady in the land, went outside the door, and left them alone together. And outside the door she found the Bardolph, *née* Tearsheet, who said, "Well, Miss Burton, I have served you well to-night."

And Emma said, "God bless you for it—nobly."

"I suppose you wouldn't make no amends for it? I suppose you wouldn't do nothing in return as I asked you?"

"I will do anything. God, who has saved one who is very dear to me, from ruin, to-night, is my witness, Mrs. Bardolph."

"Well, when you're a saying of your prayers, which you says them constant, as you give me to understand when I had the fever, and wanted me to do it also—when you says 'em, take and say one for me. 'Lord!

says you, 'I don't uphold her in nothink as she's done, but it wasn't *all* her fault'—There, there's your sweetheart. You'd best go. Let me send out that little devil, Ben, to see if the traps is clear. Ben! Ben!"

Ben, although he had been, a very short time before, brutally knocked on to the top of the kitchen fire, and had laid stunned for some time, was up to the mark, and appeared, with the indomitable pluck of his nation, ready for action. He was very pale and ill, but he winked at Emma, and hoped, in a weak voice, that her young man wasn't jealous, for the girls was always a running after him. Having done his patrol, he came back and reported an entire absence of the executive arm, whether in the uniform of their country, or disguised in the habiliments of private citizens. And then, Emma having caught him up and kissed him a dozen times, the two cousins departed.

CHAPTER XVII.

EMMA GIVES THE KEY TO THE LANDLORD.

"My dear Gerty," said Sir George, looking up from his dinner at his wife, "I expect an old acquaintance of yours here this evening."

"And who is that, my dear?—an Australian?"

"No; it is only young Burton, the waterman. I think you used to like him."

"Indeed, I like him very much."

"I am very glad to hear that, Gerty, my love; for I was thinking of providing for him, as an under-keeper at Stanlake, if you didn't object."

"I object, George! I am very fond of him, indeed. He puts me in mind of a merry young man (a hand* I regret to say) that my father had—Billy Dargan."

"Do you mean Dargan who was hung for piracy?"

"The very same. How clever of you to know that, for he was hung before your time!"

* A convict.

"Good heavens, Gerty! Do you mean to say that poor Reuben puts you in mind of that fellow?"

"To a most extraordinary degree," said Gerty, looking up; and then, seeing she was somehow making a terrible mistake, adding, "I mean in his way of tying his handkerchief. And there is also an indescribable style about his legs, a kind of horn-pipy expression about them, which forcibly recalls poor Dargan's legs to my mind at this moment."

"I was afraid you meant that they were alike in expression of face."

"Oh, good gracious, how ridiculous!" said Gerty, who *had* meant it, nevertheless. "The idea! Fancy poor Reuben cutting a skipper's throat, and throwing the crew overboard, and practising at them with a rifle! What can make you think of such wicked things, you ridiculous old stupid?"

"You'll be kind to him then, Gerty, old girl?"

"Indeed, I will, Georgy. I'll be kind to anything or anybody that *you* like. I'll be most affectionate to him, I assure you. Lor! My word! I wonder what Aggy is at now."

"Fast asleep in bed, dear. Nine hours' difference in time, you know."

"Yes; that's very curious. It quite reminds me of Joshua putting back the dial of Ahaz—I mean

Ahasuerus. What a goose I must be! though I don't believe you know the difference, you dear old heathen. I say, George."

"Yes, Gerty."

"When are we going back to Cooksland, dear?"

"To Cooksland?"

"Yes, dear. Lesbia and Phelim O'Ryan are going back next month. It would be rather nice to go with them, wouldn't it?"

George, the baronet, with ten thousand a year, had not much notion of going back there at all, as you may suppose. But he did not wish to break the fact to Gerty suddenly. Gerty, in good humour, was a very pleasant companion; but a lachrymose and low-spirited Gerty was, as he knew by experience, enough to drive far less irritable men than he out of their senses. Her infinite silliness sat most prettily on her when she was cheerful and happy; but her silliness, when superadded to chronic, whimpering, low spirits, was unendurable. And, moreover, he had acquired a certain sort of respect for Gerty. Silly as she was, she had played her cards well enough to make his father destroy the obnoxious will. He could not deny, he thought, that all their present prosperity was owing to her. Luck had prevented his father making a new will, but Gerty's beauty and childishness had

most undoubtedly been the cause of his destroying the old one. He gave that sort of respect to Gerty which is generally accorded to fortunate legatees—the respect and admiration, in short, which we are most of us prepared to pay to luck. So he temporized.

“My love,” he said, “you know that the colony is not healthy for very young children. You must know that.”

She was obliged to confess that it was very notorious.

“We must wait until baby is stronger—we must, indeed. Just think of poor Professor Brown’s children—not one left in two years.”

She acquiesced with a sigh. “You know best, dear. But, oh! George, this dreadful winter! Think of the cold!”

“We will go to Italy, dear. You will never regret Australia there. Halloo, here comes Reuben. Let us have him in.”

And so poor Reuben was had in. He looked a great deal older and more sobered than when we first knew him at Stanlake, but not in other respects altered—changed in degree, but not in quality—a little low-spirited under recent events, but not at all disinclined to be as slangy and merry as ever, as soon as the sun should shine.

"Jim told me you wanted to speak to me, sir."

"Quite right. I want to know what you are thinking of doing. I wish to help you."

"I'm a-going to Australia, sir, with my cousins. They have been very kind, sir. Whether it was their natural kindness, or whether it was my cousin Emma who influenced them, or partly both, I don't know ; but after all the sorrow, and trouble, and disgrace I have caused them, they took me back again, as if nothing had happened. Any one would have thought that I had always been an honour to them, and that I had just done 'em some great kindness. The old man, he says—'Reuben, my boy, I'm glad to see you home again. It's a poor place and will be poorer, my old chap, he says ; but such as it is, you're welcome to it.' And so I am going to Australia with them."

"But have you got any money to go with?"

"No, sir," said Reuben. "They are going to take me, and I am to make it good afterwards."

"But you would not go if you were offered a good situation in England?"

"I'd rather not go," said Reuben. "But I'm doubtful how they would take it."

"George," said Gerty, suddenly and eagerly, "order the carriage for me, and let me go to these people and

represent the matter to them. I will make it all right for you. Let me go."

George felt sincerely obliged to his wife for her readiness to anticipate his wishes ; but it was not that which made Gerty so eager about the matter. No ; these people, these Burtons, had suddenly become sacred and important people in her eyes. For were they not going to that sunny happy land where she was born ; would they not soon see, with the actual eyes of the flesh, and not in dreams, as she did, that dear old home of hers, which, she began to think, she herself would never, never, see again ?

She drove hurriedly to Chelsea, and the coachman soon found the place for her. She was nearly too late. The great house was empty and the rooms all desolate : but the door was not yet shut, the neighbours told her, and there was some one in the house still ; so Gerty, not a bit frightened, after knocking once or twice at the door, went in, and entered the great room on the lower floor, where the family were accustomed to live.

All deserted, melancholy, cold, and dead, the room was no more a room now than is the corpse you put into the coffin your friend. Life, motion, and sound were gone from it, and there was no expression in it, save the blank stare of death. The old walls which, when partly covered with furniture, used to laugh and

wink from fifty projections in the firelight, now stared down, four cold, bare, white expanses, on little Gerty standing in the middle of the room, all in black. She had never happened to see a dismantled home before, and her gentle little soul was saddened by it; and she yearned to be with those that were gone, in the happy land far away.

She noticed the empty open cupboards; nails upon the walls; the marks where a few pictures had hung; and the few things which were left lying about. They were very few, only such things as were deemed unworthy of removal—a scrap of carpet with holes in it, or more correctly, some holes, with a little carpet round them; a hearth-broom, which reminded her, she said afterwards, of Lieutenant Tomkins of the Black Police, for it had shaved off its beard and whiskers, and only wore a slight moustache; a handbox, which had been fighting, and got its head broken; and a dog of Fred's with his bellows broken off. The foolish little woman felt sorry for these things. She thought they must feel very lonely at being left behind, and went so far as to take pity on Fred's dog, and hire it for the service of Baby. And, when she had done this, knowing that there were people in the house somewhere, she, as adventurous a little body, in warm weather, as you would easily find, determined to go up stairs,—and up she went;

and in course of time she came to the vast room on the first floor, so often described by the young blacksmith in these pages, and peeped in.

It was all bare, empty, and dismantled. There was nothing in it. But two people stood together in one of the many windows which looked westward ; and they stood so still and silent, and looked so strange and small in the midst of the majestic desolation, that Gerty stood still too, and was afraid to speak.

They were a young man and a young woman, and the young woman said, " You hardly did right in coming back this afternoon, when you knew I was all alone. Did you now ? "

" I don't know, and I don't care, Emma. I knew that yours was to be the last footstep which crossed the threshold and left the dear old house to darkness and solitude, and I determined to be with you. Loving you so madly as I do, every board in these rooms which you have walked on is sacred to me by the mere tread of your footstep. So I determined to see the last of the house with you, who are the cause of my loving it, and who get dearer to me day by day and hour by hour."

" Erne ! Erne ! don't drive me mad. You have no right to talk to me like this."

" I have. You gave it once. Do you think you can

recall it? Never! I have the right to talk to you like this until you can look me in the face and tell me that you do not love me. And when will that be, hey?"

"Never," she answered, "as you well know. Are you determined, cruelly, to make me undergo my full punishment for two days' indiscretion?"

"Yes; there is no escape but one. I am determined."

"And so am I," said Emma, wearily. "It is time to go, is it not? Are you going to persist in your mad refusal of your share of the property?"

"I will never ask him for it," replied Erne.

"What insanity!" she repeated. "When Mr. Compton tells you that your share of the personal property would be nearly enough to keep you in England."

"I will never ask for it."

"You mean that you will follow me, and bring yourself to my level."

By this time Gerty had fully satisfied herself that she was eavesdropping, and, hearing her husband's name mentioned, felt it high time to say, Ahem! Whereupon the couple in the window turned; and Erne and she recognised one another; and, Erne running to her, she fairly threw her arms round his neck, and hugged him.

"My dear Erne, to find you here! You never did, you know. And your pretty sweetheart, too; you

must give me a kiss, dear Emma ; do you remember the day I nearly fainted in church, and you put your arm round me ? My dear, you are the very person I wanted. Sir George sent me here to say that he is willing to provide handsomely for Reuben, if you won't be offended at his staying behind. Reuben wants your father to have it explained to him that he is not ungrateful, but the contrary. You'll undertake to square matters, won't you ? What were you and Erne quarrelling about just now ? I want you to tell me ; because, in return for your making the peace between Reuben and your father, I will set matters all right between Erne and you. Come, now, tell me ?”

Erne said that it was only an outbreak of violence on Emma's part.

“ Oh ! that is nothing. George is like that sometimes. Are you two married ? ”

Erne said “ No. Not yet.”

“ If I was in your place, I should send down to the township for the parson, and get tied up right away. That will be the real peppermint, you'll find ; because, you see, dear, now that your father and all your brothers and sisters are gone, you'll find it lonely.”

“ I am going with them, ma'am,” said poor Emma.

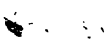

“ Oh dear ! I hope you have not broken with Erne. My sweetest girl, he loves the ground you walk on.

Oh my good gracious goodness me ! why, he never used to talk to one about anything else. I never was so sorry ; I'd sooner that the garden was a-fire ; I'd sooner that all the sheep were adrift in the Mallee ; I'd sooner that the Honeysuckle dam was mopped up as dry as Sturt Street. I'd sooner—"

"Gerty, dear," said Erne, arresting her in her Homeric catalogue of the evils which come on those who have fallen under the anger of the gods (in Australia), and taking her aside, "Nothing is broken off. I am going to Cooksland too."

Gerty having been suddenly shunted off one line of rails, while at full speed, and being very much astonished, put on all her breaks, and stopped ; which gave Erne time to go on.

"My dearest sister, you can be of most inestimable service to us. I could not get at you (you know why, dear), and it seems a special Providence, my having met you here. What I want done is this : go home and write letters to your sister and brother-in-law, introducing me and the Burtons. Say all that you can about us. Do the best you can, and send these letters to this address. Above all, dear Gerty, do this. Now, I am very much in earnest, dear, and I am sure you will do as I ask you. Tell George every particular about this interview, and what I have asked you to do,



before you put pen to paper. Will you promise me this?"

Yes, she would promise it, if need were; but, didn't Erne think, that under the circumstances, eh? And James could do so much for them, too. And if George *were* to forbid her to write?

Erne said, "He will give you leave, Gerty. I'll bet you a pair of gloves he does. George is justly and righteously angry with me just now, but he'll forgive me some day: when I am worthy of his forgiveness. When I have made my fortune, Gerty, I will come and kneel at his feet. He would suspect me now I am poor. Now, good-bye."

Those three came out of the old house into the summer sunshine, and Emma came last, and then turned and locked the door. Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, son of the blacksmith at Putney, first opened that hospitable old door, and now Emma Burton, daughter of the blacksmith at Chelsea, locked it up for ever.

When mighty America was only a small irregular line on the chart of the world, that pile of brick and stone was built up; and we, poor worms of a day, have seen it stand there, and have weaved a child's fancies about it. I, who write, remember well that, on my return home, after a long residence in the most fire-new of all sucking empires, constructed with the latest

improvements—gas, universal suffrage, telegraphs, religious toleration, and all—it was a great wonder to me, living in a house which had actually been built nearly sixty years. I remember that, at first, the date of every building I saw, and the reflections as to what had happened since that building was put up, had an intense interest for me. A Londoner passes Westminster Abbey every day in the week, and it is Westminster Abbey to him, and there is a cab-stand at the corner: but, if you want to know what veneration for antiquity means, you must go to an American or to an Australian to find out: you must follow Mr. and Mrs. Nalder, through Westminster Abbey—taking care they don't see you, or they will immediately vilipend the whole affair, for the honour of old Chicago.

So Emma, preparing for her flight from the country of impertinent sparrows, to the country of still more impertinent parrakeets, locked the door, and ended the history of Church Place as a home. Hereafter, during the short space that the old house stood, no lover lingered about the door in the summer twilight, for the chance of one more sweet whisper; no children played about the door-step, or sent the echoes of their voices ringing through the lofty rooms; no blushing fluttering bride passed in to her happiness; and no coffin was ever carried forth, save one.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JAMES BURTON'S STORY : OUR VOYAGE, WITH A LONG
DESCRIPTION OF SOME QUEER FISH THAT WE SAW.

I KNOW that my friendship for Erne Hillyar was, at first, only one of those boy friendships which I suppose all boys have had ; which after a time fade away, and then grow strong again for another object ; or, if there be no new object, simply wear out into a kind of half-jealous regret. "He don't care for me as he used," you say mournfully ; no, but how much do you care for him, my good friend ? Would you go into the next street to meet him, if it would prevent your going ten miles to get ten minutes with Mary ? I think not. These boy passions die out to a certain limit, and to a certain limit only ; for there is always a tenderness left for the old boy after all. Tom must always have reserved for him the inestimable and delicious privilege of being bored to death with the catalogue of Mary's perfections, until he mentally howls at the mention of

that dear creature's name; and Tom must be your best man at the wedding if procurable, because the renewal of the old *tendresse* on that particular occasion is something sentimentally good and graceful, even if it is the finish and end of the whole business—for which result there is no possible reason.

But my friendship for Erne was not of this kind altogether, for it grew and developed. Martha never came between him and me for a moment. I fell in love with Martha—well, principally, I believe, because I fell in love with her. Come, sir, what made you fall in love with your wife? Don't know? No more do I know why I fell in love with my wife, unless it was her spraining her ankle on the slide by Clerkenwell Prison, and having no one to take her home. But, having once fallen in love with her, I began to find out, by degrees, what a noble, excellent little body she was; and so my love for her grew and grew, and I would not like to swear (though I should not like her to know it) that it has reached its full development yet. And yet, the more I loved Martha, the more my friendship for Erne became part of myself. For, having inherited from my mother the trick of living, save on special emergencies, in the future, or in the past, or anywhere but in the present, I had gradually built up for myself a palace of fancy, quite as beautiful as you could expect

from a mere blacksmith's lad, in which palace Martha and I were to live for ever in comfort by the products of my trade, and in which also Erne and Emma were to take up their abode with us, and live on—say manna or quails: details are contemptible. I fancy, if my recollection serves me, that part of the scheme was that Martha and I were to have four children, two boys and two girls, exceedingly beautiful and good; and that, when we had arrived at this point, we were to stop—which we haven't. I think also, at one time, after having seen a certain picture, that I intended to have another and a fifth child, who was to die beautifully in infancy, and to do something absolutely tremendous, in a sentimental point of view, on its deathbed. I don't know how long this last fancy—thank God, only a fancy—endured; but I do know that this dear martyr was the only one of my five children for whom I sketched out any future whatever. The other four were to remain children, ranging in age from two years to seven, until Martha and I, grey-headed in the character of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, were borne together (having died the same day—a matter of detail easily arranged on a future opportunity) into the churchyard of the late ingenious Mr. Gray's "Elegy," followed by a sorrowing population.

Erne and Emma had become so necessary a part of

this day-dream, and this day-dream moreover had become such a very necessary part of myself, that I was more distressed than you can well conceive at the estrangement between them. The more so, because I did not for one moment share Erne's hope of any alteration taking place in Emma's resolution. Whether I judged on this matter from reason or from instinct I hardly know ; whichever it was, my conclusion was the same. I had a profound faith in a certain quiet determination which I saw now in Emma's face, and which in my moments of irritation—an irritation, however, which I never outwardly showed—I called obstinacy.

I had my sanguine moods, however. There was a gentle, tender, and yet unobtrusive assiduity about Erne's attentions to her, which gave me great hopes. No woman, I thought, could resist that sort of thing long, particularly a woman who loved him as she loved him. Alas! though I knew it not, it was her very love for him which gave her the strength to resist him. When my mother told me what she had said, "He must rise, and I should only drag him down," I lost hope again. That motive, superadded to her devotion to poor Joe, made my day-dream fade away once more.

Now, being in a certain line of business myself, I made the remarkable discovery, which has been con-

firmed by later experience on my own part, and by comparison of notes with eminent travellers from all quarters of the globe; that there is no such a place for courting as aboard ship. Even suppose that the ship completed her voyage on a perfectly even keel, without any motion whatever—even in that extreme case you would have the great advantage of constant intercourse. But then she don't; but, on the contrary, rolls, dives and leaps like a mad thing, three quarters of her time, and by this means actually, as well as metaphorically, so throws young people together—gives rise to such a necessity for small attentions, that it's wonder to me sometimes—when in one of my mother's moods—why, on the arrival of the ship into port, all the unmarried couples on board don't pair off, and go straight off to church to get married.*

One day of one long voyage comes before me particularly clearly. And yet, as I write, I cannot say that all the little circumstances which I tell took place on that day, or on several; for at sea Time is naught, but his mechanical and earthly eidola, latitude and longitude, take his place. I can't tell you in what month this day (or these days, it may be) fell; but it was in the trades, though whether N.E. or S.E.

* I beg to call the Hon. J. Burton's attention to the fact that they almost always do.

I cannot at this period undertake to remember. Yes, it was in the trades.

For all space was filled with a divine grey-blue effulgence, which has, to my wandering fancy, always seemed to be the trade-wind itself—the only visible wind I know of. It was not too hot nor too cold, nor too bright nor too dull; and the ship was going fast, and heeling over enough to make everything you leant against more pleasant than a rocking-chair—going with a gentle heaving motion, for which it would be absurd to hunt up a simile, because there is nothing so wonderfully delightful wherewith to compare it. There were clouds, slow sailing clouds, but they were of frosted silver; and there was open sky, but of the very faintest blue, save immediately overhead, where the delicate needle of a top-gallant mast swept across it in a shortened arc, and where it was a faint purple. There were sounds—one a gentle universal rush, that of the wind itself, filling space; and others, supplementary voices; the low gentle lapping of the waves upon the ship's side, and the sleepy gurgling and hissing of many eddies around her. All things seemed going one way with some settled kindly purpose. The clouds seemed to be leading the wind, and the wind to be steadily following the clouds, while the purple waves, a joyous busy crowd, seemed to

be hurrying on after both of them, to some unknown trysting-place. Yes, I know we were in the trades.*

Martha was sitting on the top of some spare spars under the lee bulwark, and I was sitting beside her, but on a lower level, and a little more forward, so that I had to lean backwards whenever I wanted to look in her face. And this was a very nice arrangement, because I generally found that she was looking at me, and I caught the soft, quiet gaze of her deep calm love, before it broke into the gentle smile that—Hullo here, hallo! this will never do. I mean that it was a very good place to sit in, because it was in the shade under one of the boats, and we could quietly watch every one else, and make our comments upon them. No one ever took the trouble to watch us. Every one knew that we were keeping company. We were rather favourites in the ship from being a quiet pair of bodies, but were otherwise uninteresting.

By the mainmast was my father, in close confabulation with "Damper." Now, although "Damper" is only a nickname, and a rather low one (meaning unleavened bread), yet you are not to suppose that the gentleman who owns it is at all a low person.

* Mr. Henry Burton begs to state that the whole of the above paragraph is copied (cribbed would be more correct) *verbatim* from his log-book. The passage as it stands may be found at p. 58 of his "Miscellanies in Verse and Prose." Bleet. Palmerston: 1858.

He, as he stands there against the mainmast, with his square brown face and grizzled hair, close to my father's square brown face and grizzled hair, is a most resplendent and magnificent gentleman. His clothes are the richest and best-made that London can give him; the watch and chain he wears in and over his white waistcoat cost more than a hundred guineas; he has been five-and-twenty years in Australia, and is worth very nearly half a million of money; his style and titles before the world are the Honourable John Dawson, M.L.C., of no less than seven places, colonial estates of his, the names of which seem to have been made up by a committee of all the lunatics in Bedlam at full moon.* Yet this man is disrespectfully called "Damper" (which is a low colonialism, a common name for a working bullock), behind his back, by the whole ship's company; and I—I, the blacksmith's lad—have that man under my thumb and, in my power to that extent that, whenever I take the liberty of being in company with him, he addresses the principal part of the conversation deferentially to me. I don't know that I ever should have the heart to denounce the low-lived villain; but it is pleasant to hold a man who wears a hundred-guinea watch, as it were, in the hollow of your hand.

* Fancy a place called Pywheitjork.

The truth is that I found this low fellow out quite accidentally. One day, going on board the ship when she was in the docks, I, who had already heard what a great man he was, was struck not only with his magnificent appearance, but also with the practical knowledge he showed, connected with some rather delicate machinery, a small case of which had been broken open by careless men. I was surprised to hear him tell his servant carefully to lubricate the articles with Rangoon oil before they were repacked, to keep the salt air from them; and there was something grand and strange in finding that so splendid a person could be up in such details as these, or should take the trouble to attend to them. But, half an hour after, I found the low-lived impostor out. Going into a blacksmith's forge in the Commercial Road, there I found him. His coat and waistcoat were off; his hundred-guinea watch was laid on the bench among the tools; his head was bare; his shirt-sleeves were turned up to his elbows; and he was engaged in welding two pieces of iron together, one of the smith's assisting him, with a rapidity and dexterity in the use of his hammer which proved at once the disgraceful fact. This legislator, this responsible adviser of his sovereign's representative, this millionaire aristocrat, this fellow who only the week before had disported

himself in the presence of royalty at St. James's with breeches and silk stockings on his impostor's legs and silver buckles in his low-lived shoes—this man was not only a blacksmith, but an uncommon good one.

I don't think I ever felt so proud of the old British empire before. I wished the Queen could have seen him, and I daresay she would have been as pleased as I was. But the Honourable Jack Dawson did not see it in this light at all. Every one who had ever heard his name, from her Majesty downwards, knew that this great Australian millionaire had been a blacksmith, and he knew they knew it; it was the crowning point of his honour; and yet the honest fellow was most amusingly ashamed of it. When I found him in the shop, he put on his coat and waistcoat, and took me by the arm, pushing me before him into a neighbouring public-house. He then made me swallow a glass of strong waters before he said anything.

"I see you aboard the ship to-day."

"Yes, sir."

"You're a smith yourself, ar'n't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't say nothing about what you see me doing on. I'm a friend of yours. Don't say nothing of it aboard

ship. There's Pollifex and Morton aboard, and I should never hear the last on it. It was that Morton as christened me 'Damper'; and see how that's stuck. Hold your tongue, my boy, and I'm a friend of yours, remember."

And so he was, a most generous and kind one. We had hardly got to sea before he found my father out. The two men, so much of an age, and so much alike, conceived a strong liking for one another, which, as you may guess, was of immense benefit to us.

Whom else do Martha and I see, from our lair under the boat? Why, Pollifex and Morton, of whom our friend, John Dawson, stands so much in dread. They have come down into the waist to smoke their cigars, and are leaning against the capstan. Let us have a look at these two typical men; it is really worth the time.

The Honourable Abiram Pollifex—"Accommodation Pollifex," "Footrot Pollifex," "Chimpansee Pollifex," as he is indifferently called by his friends and enemies—is only a new comer in Cooksland, having migrated thither from the older and better-known Australian colony of Endractsland, where, for a considerable number of years, he filled the post (Harry says that is not good English, but I am head of the family, and will use what English I choose) of Colonial Secretary. His great political object, consistently,

and somewhat skilfully pursued through sixteen years, precisely corresponded with that of Sir Robert Walpole, as described by Mr. Carlyle, to keep things going, and to keep himself, Robert Walpole, on the top of them.

I am not sure that the historical parallel between these two great statesmen need stop at the mere statement of their political motives. There is a certain similarity in the means they used to attain their end. They both bribed as hard as they could, and both did as little as possible in the way of legislation. With regard to bribery, Walpole was decidedly the greatest man, save in intention; but with regard to "*laissez aller*," Pollifex beat him hollow.

Pollifex—a long, lean, lanthorn-jawed Devonshire squireen, known through all the old West country for his *bonhomie*, his amazing powers of dry humour, and wonderfully remarkable personal appearance—took the place of prime minister in Endractsland, somewhere in the dark and prehistoric ages (say as long ago as 1820), because there didn't happen to be any one else. He was one of the best secretaries they ever had. To say that he governed the colony wisely and well would be to talk nonsense, because he never governed it at all, but shewed his great shrewdness in letting it develop itself. When he took the reins, the landscape was still lit up with the lurid glare of the convict hell, from the

dark night of which the little community had barely emerged. When he dropped them, the tide of free emigration had set strongly in; and he himself saw that the dawn had begun, and that the time of freer institutions was at hand—that, with some restrictions, a rather liberal suffrage could be conceded to the new non-convict emigrants who had poured in in such numbers; and he reluctantly extended it to such of the convicts as had so far practically shown their reformation, as to have homesteads of 180 acres; on the ground that some of them compared favourably with the emigrants. Then the old Tory took himself quietly out of the gap, and let the waters run in. He had no objection to looking on, and seeing it done, but he would have no hand in it. *He*, at all events, was no Tory who would bid for power by bringing in a measure of Reform.

I have said that he did nothing; and in a legislative point of view he *had* done nothing; and yet he had done that same nothing in such a wonderfully shrewd and dexterous way that in the end it amounted to a very great something. No less than five governors—all of them good gentlemen, but each and all of them absolutely ignorant of the temper of the colonists and the wants of the colony—had been sent over to him; and he, by his tact, had prevented every one of

these new brooms from sweeping too clean, until they saw where to sweep: nay, very often succeeded in persuading them not to sweep at all, but to let the dust be blown away by the free winds of heaven; and this was something. Again, his own wealth had grown enormously, as wealth will grow in Australia; his sheep and cattle multiplied under his superintendents; and so his interests got identified with the squatters. Thus he had the power, as one of the greatest of them, to stand between them and the *doctrinaires* and retired military officers who were in those times sent out as governors. He bribed shamefully in the creation of places for the sons of turbulent colonists; but he always kept a clear balance-sheet; and, as for his own hands, they were as clean as snow; he was a poorer man by many thousands from his long retention of office. A man of higher aspirations, and less practical shrewdness, would not have done the work half so well. On the emergence of a colony from the Sodom-and-Gomorrhah state of things incidental on a convict community, into such a noble kingdom as Endractsland now is, there is a certain amount of dirty work which some one must do. James Oxtou found a virgin soil, and brought over a free population. *His* work was as clean as his own shirt-front, and he did it well. Pollifex

found Bedlam and Newgate boiling up together, and had to watch the pot. All honour to him that he did the dirty work as cleanly as he did.

Now let us take a glance at the handsome brown-faced, gentlemanly looking dandy, with a carefully trimmed moustache, who stands beside him. He is a very different sort of person; infinitely more of a "representative" man than Chimpansee Pollifex, from the simple fact that he is by no means an uncommon article—nay, more, is one of the commonest articles going—though developed, as far as he is capable of development, by exceptional circumstances; a young English gentleman of good family, with a public-school education. When we were over in England for the Exhibition of 1862, we hired a carriage and went for a drive in the park; and there, if we saw one Charles Morton, we saw five hundred. Charles Mortons were standing against the rails in long rows, like penguins—each one most wonderfully like the other; all cast nearly in the same mould by Nature, and, if not, every trifling peculiarity of outward look polished away by inexorable custom; all dressed alike, with their beards and moustaches so exactly in the same pattern that it became ludicrous; men whom those who don't know them sneer at as mere flaneurs, but whose suppressed volcanic energy shows itself, to those

who care to observe, in that singularly insane and dangerous amusement, fox-hunting—all men with whom falsehood, cowardice, and dishonour are simply nameless impossibilities. We know them better than we did, since the darkening hours of Sebastopol and Delhi, and it was only their own faults that such as I did not know them better before. The halo of glory which was thrown round the heads of these dandies, by their magnificent valour from 1854 to 1859, has done the body of them an infinite deal of harm. We can trust you, and will follow you in war, gentlemen; but in peace, cannot you manage to amalgamate a little more with the middle and lower classes? Are the old class-distinctions to go on for ever, and leave you dandies, the very men we are ready to take by the hand and make friends of, in a minority, as regards the whole nation, of 1 to 99? Can't we see a little more of you, gentlemen, just at this time, when there is no great political difficulty between your class and ours; if it were only for the reason that no one out of Bedlam supposes that things are always to go on with the same oily smoothness as they are doing just now. I think we understand you, gentlemen. I wish you would take your gloves off sometimes. You have been more courteous to us since the Reform Bill; but certain ill-conditioned blackguards among us

say that it is only the courtesy which is engendered of fear, and but ill replaces the old condescending *bonhommie* which we shared with your pointers and your grooms. Douglas Jerrold is dead, and buried at Kensal Green; and there happens to be no one alive at present who is able, or cares, to overstate the case of the poor against the rich with quite so much cleverness as he. But at any dark hour another man of similar abilities might come forth and make terrible mischief between us again. You can be earnest and hearty enough about anything of which you see the necessity. Can no one persuade you that the most necessary thing just now is an amalgamation of classes? You could never get together a *Jeunesse Dorée* without our assistance, and yet you treat us like *sans-culottes*.

Charles Morton was at Eton, and, while there, I do not doubt displayed the qualities hereditary in his family—truth, honour, and manliness. Another quality, also hereditary in his family, he got but scant opportunity of displaying at Eton—I allude to the accomplishment of horsemanship; but, when he got to St. Paul's College, Oxford, he made up for lost time. From this time forward he seemed to forget that he had any legs. Boating, cricket, football, everything was neglected utterly. He got on horseback and stayed there; and

henceforth the history of the man's life is, to a great extent, the history of his horses.

Hunting at Oxford, as I gather from the highest attainable authority, costs just five pounds a day if you send on; and you can hunt five days a week. By a rough calculation, then, Charley must have spent near five hundred pounds in the hunting season. Besides this, he liked to be dressed like a gentleman. Besides this, again, he was fond of seeing his friends, and his friends were rather a fast and riotous lot, as Greatbatch's bill clearly proved. "Why, Charley, my boy," said his father, "you seem not only to have drunk the punch, but to have swallowed the bowls afterwards." All of which would certainly cost four hundred a year more. Thus we have brought Charley up to nine hundred a year, without mentioning any other items of extravagance; whereas his allowance was strictly limited to 350*l*. It became necessary for Master Charley to leave the University.

The governor had just had in a few little bills from Charley's elder brother Jim, in the 140th Dragoons; and so he had heard enough of the army just then. Law and physic were denied to Charley from incapacity and idleness; and, as there did not seem to be any reasonable hope of fitting Charley, with his habits, for a cure of souls at a less expense than some five thousand

pounds, it was considered that, taking risks into consideration, the Church would barely pay the interest on the money. Therefore there was nothing to do but for him to go to Australia.

The discovery of that vast continent which we call Australia is an important era in the history of the world. For it opened, in the first place, a career for young gentlemen possessed of every virtue, save those of continence, sobriety, and industry, who didn't choose to walk, and couldn't afford to ride ; and, viewed from this point, its discovery ranks next in importance after the invention of soda-water—a sort of way of escaping cheaply from the consequences of debauchery for a time. But not only did the new country turn out to be the most wonderfully scentless cesspool for a vast quantity of nameless rubbish, convicted and unconvicted ; but it gave an opening also for really honest, upright fellows like Charles Morton, with no more faults than most of us, except the very great one of being educated in such a way that no possible career is open to them. What is a fellow to do if his father chooses to play his game of whist with fourteen cards, and if he happens to be the fourteenth ?

The very qualities which made Charles a most expensive and useless, though highly ornamental, piece of furniture at home, caused him to be a most useful and

valuable commercial partner among the Bucolic, almost in those times Nomadic, aristocracy of the new land. The same spirit that took Charley's Norman ancestors to Jerusalem took Charley to the Condamine. Charles Morton is our very greatest pioneer. Neither Gil Maclean (brother of Colonel Maclean—"Red" Maclean, as he is generally called) nor Corny Kelly, the most popular man in the colony with men and women, can compare with Charley as a pioneer. The two Celts are as brave as he, but they both fail in the point of temper. Both the Highlander and the Irishman are too hot with the blacks, and embroil themselves with them. Charles Morton has Charles Sturt's beautiful patient temper. Like him, he can walk quietly among the wretched savages, and, with fifty spears aimed quivering at his heart, and ready to fly at any moment, can sit quietly down and begin to laugh, and laugh on till they begin to laugh too. His two noble friends, Maclean and Kelly, can't do this. Their Celt blood is too pure: in convivial moments they chaff Charley with having a cross of Saxon in him; and, if they knew the truth, they would hug themselves on their sagacity.

These qualities of Charles Morton have been so highly appreciated that he is at this moment the most important partner in the "North West Company;" of which company, consisting of eight wealthy men, James

Oxton is the most active manager. Charles Morton married, as we know from former passages of this book, Lady Hillyar's elder sister, and so is James Oxton's brother-in-law. I suppose that, as this thriftless horse-riding dandy stands there on the deck, talking to Abiram Pollifex, he is worth from fifty to sixty thousand pounds.

There sits my mother on the deck, too, with the children lying about on her skirts, or propping themselves up against her, as if she were a piece of furniture. My mother's mind has returned to its old peaceful lethargic state once more. On the occasion of Fred's casting himself down the skylight on to the top of the second-cabin dinner-table, she remarked that it was cheering to know that all the houses in Australia were of one storey, and that the great trouble of her life would soon be over. And, taking care of poor Joe, who is very ailing and weak, low in mind and body, and needs all her care (and will need more of it yet, I see), with a falling countenance, there sits Emma in the sunshine working, and Erne has just come and leant over her, and is speaking to her. I wonder what he is saying. Some commonplace; for she only smiles, and then goes wearily on with her work.

Such were the new acquaintances with whom we began our new life in the new land. How long we

have gossipped about them, these odd people and their histories ! so long, that we have been four months on the restless sea, and now there is a different scent in the air. Ha ! here is the first messenger from the shore. A fly—a blue-bottle fly ; for he buzzes, and is difficult to catch, and bangs his idiotic head against the glass ; in all respects a blue-bottle, save, oh wonderful fact ! that he is brown. Yes, he is the first instance of those parallel types, reproduced in different colours, and with trifling differences—so small as to barely constitute a fresh species—and the origin of which is such a deep deep wonder and mystery to me to this day. Tell me, O Darwin, shall we know on this side of the grave why or how the *Adiantum Nigrum* and *Asplenium capillis Veneris*, have reproduced themselves, or, to be more correct, have produced ghosts and fetches of themselves at the antipodes ? I have seen icebergs and cyclones, and many things ; but I never was so lost in puzzled wonder as I was that afternoon when I found *Asplenium viride* growing in abundance on the volcanic boulders, at the foot of Mirngish. It was Sunday afternoon, and I went home, and thought about it, and I am thinking about it still.*

But see ; a new morn arises, and flushes a crimson

* Australian *Asplenium Viride* again cannot be distinguished ; no more can Australian *Woodsia Hyperborea*.

and purple light, in long streamers, aloft to the zenith ; and we are sailing slowly along under high-piled forest capes, more strange, more majestic, and more infinitely melancholy than anything we have seen in our strangest dreams. What is this awful, dim, mysterious land, so solemn and so desolate ? This is Australia.

CHAPTER XIX.

GERTY IN SOCIETY.

THOSE whom one has asked say that it is easy enough for any one with either brains, or money, or manners, to see a great deal of society in London—to be, in fact, in the room with the very greatest people in the land, to be presented to them, and to speak to them—and yet not to be in society at all, in one sense of the word. If this is so, as there is no disputing, we should say that, if ever people were in this predicament, those two people were George and Gerty. The season after his father's death, George went to London, refurnished the house in Grosvenor Place, filled the balconies with flowers, had new carriages, horses, and servants, made every preparation for spending double his income, and then sat down to wait for society to come and be hospitably entertained with the best of everything which money could buy.

Society had quite enough to eat and drink elsewhere. It wanted to know first who this Sir George Hillyar was—which was easily found out from the Tory whip, and from Burke. Next it wanted to know who his wife was ; and it discovered that she was a mulatto woman (alas, poor Gerty !) or something of that kind. And, lastly, there was a most general and persistent inquiry whether you did not remember some very queer story about this Sir George Hillyar ; and the answer to this was, among the oldsters, that there *was* something deuced queer, and that no one seemed to remember the fact.

But, of course, they were by no means without acquaintances. Old Sir George had been too highly respected for that, though he had utterly withdrawn himself from the world. So by degrees they began to creep into society. The world found that George was a gentleman, with a scornful, silent, proud, and somewhat pirate-like air about him, which was decidedly attractive. As for Gerty, the world stood and gazed on her with speechless wonder. After Easter, to hear this wonderful Lady Hillyar talk was one of the things one must do. Her wonderful incomprehensible babble was so utterly puzzling that the very boldest wits were afraid to draw her out for the amusement of any company, however select. No one knew whether she

was in earnest or not, and her slang was such a very strange one. Besides, what she would say next was a thing which no one dared to predict, and was too great a risk to be rashly ventured on, even by the very boldest. A few women made her out and began to like her; and her wonderful beauty could not have failed to win many in the long-run; still, during their first season in London, this was the sort of thing which used to be heard in doorways, and on the landings of stairs.

"That's a devilish pretty woman in white."

"What, Lady Georgina Rumbolt?"

"Lord, no. The little woman in white calico, next but one to her. The woman who is all over Cape jessamine. Is she going to dance with the sweeps? Who is she?"

"That? That is Lady Hillyar," says No. 2.

"What, the little woman who swears?"

"She don't swear," says No. 2. "I wish she would; there would be some chance of finding out what she was talking about."

"I heard that she was a mulatto woman," says No. 1, "and swore like a trooper."

"She is not a mulatto woman," says No. 3. "She is a French Creole heiress from New Orleans. Her husband is the original of Roland Cashel, in Lever's last novel. He married her out there, while he was in

the slave trade ; and now his governor's dead, and he has come into twenty thousand a year."

"You are not quite right, any of you," says No. 4, who has just come up. "In the first place, Sir George Hillyar's income is not, to my certain knowledge, more than three thousand—the bulk of the property having been left to his brother Erne, who is living at Susa with Polly Burton, the rope-dancer from Vauxhall. And, in the next place, when he had to fly the country, he went to Botany Bay, and there married the pretty little doll of a thing sitting there at this moment, the daughter of a convict, who had been transported for—"

"For ratting before his master, I suppose, my lord," said Sir George Hillyar, just looking over his shoulder at the unhappy Peelite, and then passing quietly on into the crowd.

But, in spite of George's almost insolent *insouciance*, and Gerty's amazing volubility in describing her equally amazing experiences, this couple, queer though they were pronounced, were getting on. Kind old Lady Ascot fell in love with Gerty, and asked her and her husband to Ranford. The Dowager Lady Hainault, seeing that her old enemy had taken up this little idiot, came across to see if she could get a "rise" out of Gerty. Gerty rewarded Lady Ascot's kindness by telling old Lady Hainault, before a select audience, that she didn't

care a hang for a hand's going on the burst for a spell, provided he warn't saucy in his drink. Her hopeless silliness, now that she was removed from the influence of those two thoroughbred ladies, Mrs. Oxtan and Mrs. Morton, was certainly very aggravating. It was foolish in Mrs. Oxtan to trust her out of her sight.

Things went on thus for no less than two years. Gerty, having no idea but that she was as much sought after as any one else, and that she was so on account of her social qualities entirely, was perfectly contented and happy. She found out, of course, that certain houses were more difficult to get into than others; so, if she was asked to a party at Cheshire House, she would be ravished, and write a long account of it to James and Aggy, and would read this, with the greatest delight, in the *Palmerston Sentinel*, six months after when it was sent to her by her sister:—"We understand that our late reigning beauty, Lady Hillyar, who, as Miss Gertrude Neville, astonished our colony by showing us that there was one being in the world more beautiful than Mrs. Buckley of Garoopna, has fluttered the dovescotes of the British aristocracy most considerably, by her *début* at Cheshire House. It is possible that, if anything can bring the present Government to its senses about their hellish design of continuing transportation to these unhappy islands, that purpose may be accomplished

by the contemplation of, &c. &c. &c." On the other hand, if she was not asked, she would console herself by telling baby that the Duchess was a nasty odious old thing, and that her wig was the colour of tussac grass in January. Sometimes she would have a yearning for her old Australian home, which would hold her for a day or two—during which time she would be very low and tearful, and would keep out of George's way. But, after having poured all her sorrows and vain regrets into baby's ear, she would become cheerful once more, and the fit would pass off. What she would have done without this precious baby to talk to I dread to think. Her mind would have gone, I suspect. She is not the first woman who has been saved from madness by a baby.

By the time that Baby, just now called Kittlekins, short for its real name, George (George—Georgy-porgy, —Porgy—Poggy—Pug—Pussy ; Kitty Kittles—Kittlekins ; by what process of derivation his later and more permanent name of Bumbles was evolved, I confess myself at a loss to explain) just when Bumbles was getting old enough to join in the conversation, and to advise and assist his mother from his large experience, something occurred which altered their mode of life entirely, and quite shipwrecked poor little Gerty's chance of happiness for a very long while.

Mr. Nalder accepted a rather important diplomatic

appointment in the American Embassy in London. As the revenues of this office, with economy, would very nearly pay for Mrs. Nalder's bonnets,* Nalder determined to devote a considerable proportion of his handsome private income to what he called "hanging out," and took a house in Grosvenor Place, two doors from the George Hillyars. They were, of course, received everywhere in virtue of their diplomatic rank, and people began to get very fond of them, as such worthy people deserved. Meanwhile their intimacy with the George Hillyars was renewed with tenfold warmth. Mrs. Nalder thought, from their parting two years or more ago, that all was forgotten and forgiven between them, and so treated them both with affectionate *empressement*. Gerty, the silly little thing, began to get jealous of Mrs. Nalder once more, and to watch and spy about.

Of course, she would not believe that George had anything to do with it. He behaved *nobly*, according to Gerty; it was that dreadful and *most dangerous* woman who would not leave him alone. And so she made up the old old jealous woman's story over again, in a way which, considering it had not the slightest foundation in fact, did her infinite credit.

* I wish the Americans would teach us the secret of getting the men they do for the money they give.

In the midst of it all, when her suspicions were at their highest, they went down for a few days to Stanlake, and the Nalders came with them. Gerty, to throw Mrs. Nalder off her guard, was excessively gay and cheerful; so the visit went off capitally. But, the morning that the Nalders were to leave, George, having opened one of his letters at the breakfast-table, asked to be excused, and hurriedly left the room. He just reappeared to see the Nalders into their carriage, and then he looked so wan, and so wild, and so horribly guilty, that Gerty saw it all. That woman had proposed to him in that letter to go off with her!

Her silliness would have been hardly worth dwelling on, if it had not led to a certain course of action. She said to herself, "I will save him. I will get that letter from him and read it, and then tell him I know all and throw myself on his breast." We shall see how she succeeded.

George was very often very late up to bed; to-night he was later than usual. "Could he be *gone*?" thought Gerty. She hastily rose, and, wrapping herself in her dressing-gown, she went swiftly and silently downstairs. Though her beautiful little ivory feet were bare upon the cold polished oak staircase, she heeded not, but, passing on from patch to patch of bright moonlight, paused breathless at the library door, and listened.

The little woman wanted neither for cunning of a sort, nor for courage of a sort. A girl, whose first lesson was that her life and honour were in her own keeping, and that on occasions it might become necessary for her to shoot a man down with no more hesitation than would be felt in killing a beetle, might be supposed to have imbibed some small portion of these faculties. She therefore calculated her chances quite coolly.

George was there, talking to himself. If his back were towards her, the noise he made might enable her to open the door without being heard. If he saw her, why then she had merely come to coax him upstairs. She opened the door stealthily and passed in, quite unnoticed. George was sitting before the *escritoire*—the same one in which his father's will had been kept. He had a revolver beside him, and was reading a letter—a very long letter of many sheets—the letter of that morning—and every now and then uttering a fierce oath or exclamation.

She slid behind a curtain and watched. She wanted to know where he would put the letter. She was undetermined how to act, and was beginning to think whether it would not be better to open the door suddenly, and come laughing in, as if by accident, when her cunning little eye made a discovery. There was one drawer of the secretary open—one of the secret drawers,

which she had seen open frequently, and knew the trick of perfectly, as did probably every one who had once looked at it for an instant. It seemed so evident to her that George had taken Mrs. Nalder's letter from that drawer, and so certain that he would put it back there again, that she was quite satisfied to wait no longer, and so stole silently and successfully out of the room once more; and, when George came up to bed soon after, she appeared to awake with a sweet smile. "Good heavens!" she said to herself, "he looks like death."

And he looked like death in the morning. He was so absolutely silent that he seemed to be possessed of a dumb devil, and he looked utterly scared and terrified. She heard him give orders to the pad groom, which showed that he was going out, but would be home to lunch. She asked him where he was going, and he simply answered, "To Croydon."

His horse's feet were barely silent in the yard, when she was at the old secretary. The drawer was opened, and the letter was in her hand before George was out of the park. At the first glance at it, she saw that it was not from Mrs. Nalder, or from any woman, but was written in a man's hand. When she saw this, her conscience pricked her for one moment. It was not a secret in her department. She had a right to open a

woman's letter to her husband, but she had no right here. Curiosity prevailed, and she sat down and read the letter we give in the next chapter. It is hard to say how much she understood of it, but quite enough to make her hastily replace it in the drawer; to stand for an instant stupified with horror, and then to rush wildly upstairs, seize baby to her bosom, and turn round, her eyes gleaming with the ferocity of sheer terror, at bay against the enemy.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LETTER WHICH WAS NOT FROM MRS. NALDER.

"SIR,—I am about to write to you the longest letter which I have ever written in my life, and, I make bold to say, one of the strangest letters ever written by one man to another.

"Sir George, you will find me, in this letter, assuming an indignant and injured tone; and at first you will laugh at such an idea—at the idea of a man so deeply steeped in crime as I am having any right to feel injury or injustice; but you will not laugh at the end, Sir George. If your better feelings don't prevent your doing that, what I have to tell you will put you into no laughing mood.

"Who ruined me, sir? Who brought me, a silly and impressible young man, into that hell of infamy, which was called a private tutor's? Was I ever a greater scoundrel than Mottesfont, who forged his own father's name; was I ever so great a blackguard as Parkins?

No. I should have been clobbered in the hulks if I had been. Why, the only honest man in that miserable house when we first went there (save our two selves) was the poor old idiot of a tutor, who knew no more of the antecedents of his two pupils than your father did.

"And then did not I see you, the handsome merry young gentleman whom I followed for goodwill and admiration, laughing at them, seeming to admire them, and thinking them fast fellows, and teaching me to do the same? Was not I made minister of your vice? And, lastly, Sir George Hillyar—I am going to speak out—when I saw you, the young gentleman I admired and looked up to, when I saw you—I can say it to-day after what I know now—Forge: can you be the man to cast a robbery in my teeth? Am I worse than you?"

(Sir George had lit a cigar when he had read so far. "Is that the little game?" he said. "The man's brain is softening. Why old Morton, the keeper, knows all about that. But there is a lot more in reserve; three or four pages. Now I *do* wonder how he is going to try and raise the wind out of me. He is a fool for mentioning that old business, because it will only make me angry, and he can't appear without being packed off to the colony in irons for life. Oh, here is more sentimentality, hey?")

"Knowing all I have known, Sir George, have I ever

attempted to trade on it? Never. Haven't I, rogue, wretch, and dog, as I am, with hell begun in this world for me—haven't I been faithful and true to you? What did I ever have from you before that thirty pounds you gave me in Palmerston last year? You surely owed me as much as that; you surely owed Julia's husband as much as that. You received me then like a villain and a thief. I came to you humbly, and was glad to see your face again, for your face was dear to me till last night, Sir George. And you broke out on me, and bullied me, assuming that I was going to swindle you.

"If it hadn't been for the reception you gave me then, I would never have deceived you, and come to England. I would have stopped at Perth; for the tale I told you was true; but the wind was fair, and I was angry with you, and old England was before me, and so I did not go on shore. What have I done which warrants *you* in doing what you have done to me? Sir George Hillyar, sir, a master scoundrel like me knows as much or more than a leading detective. *You* know that. Last night, Sir George, it came to my knowledge that you had offered two hundred guineas for my apprehension."

("Confound the fellow, I wonder how he found that out," said Sir George. "How very singular it is his trying to take me in with these protestations of

affection. I thought him shrewder. I must have him though. I am sorry to a certain extent for the poor devil, but he must stand in the dock. All that he chooses to say about the past there will go for nothing; he will be only rebuked by the court. But if he goes at large he may take to anonymous letter-writing, or something of that kind. And he really does know too much. That's what Morton, the keeper, so sensibly said, when he advised me to do it. Yes, let him say what he has got to say in the dock, in the character of a returned convict.")

"That is to say, Sir George, in sheer unthinking cowardice, or else because you wished to stamp all I had to say as the insane charges of a desperate man, you deliberately condemned me, who had never harmed you, to a fate infinitely more horrible than death—to the iron gang for life; calculating, as I have very little doubt—for you as a police inspector know the convict world somewhat—on my suicide. Now, Sir George, who is the greatest villain of us two? Now, have I not got a case against you?"

(Sir George's face darkened, and he looked uneasy. "This fellow is getting dangerous. But I shall have him to-night.")

"Now, Sir George, please attend to me, and I will tell you a story—a story which will interest you very

deeply. I wish first of all, my dear sir—in order to quicken your curiosity—to allude to the set of sapphires valued at some eight hundred pounds, and the set of cameos valued at nearly two thousand pounds, which, to Mr. Compton's great surprise, were NOT found among your late father's effects at his most lamented demise. Do you remember discovering, while Mr. Compton and you were arranging papers, in the very front of the old black secretary, a bundle of pink and highly-scented love-letters, written in an elegant lady's hand, addressed to your father, and signed 'Mary?' The one, unless I forget, which contained the tress of auburn hair, was the one in which Mary thanked her dearest old Georgy Porgy for the *beautiful, beautiful* set of blue stones; and the one in which was the sprig of Cape jessamine was full of warm expressions of gratitude for the noble, the princely present of the cameos. I admire the respect which you and Mr. Compton showed for the memory of your late father, in saying nothing about the love-letters, and in letting the sapphires and cameos go quietly to the devil. A scandalous *liaison* in a man of your late father's age is best kept quiet. It is not respectable."

("How the deuce did he find *this* out?" said George.)

"Now, my dear sir, I beg to inform you that your dear father was utterly innocent of this 'affair.' He always was a very clean liver, was Sir George. I'll speak up for him, because he seems bitterly to have felt that he hadn't done his duty by me, and was in some sort answerable for my misdemeanours, in sending me to that den of iniquity in your company. But about these love-letters; they were written, under my direction, by a young female of good education, but who, unhappily, knows pretty near as much of the inside of Newgate as she does of the outside; they were put in that escritoire by my own hand, ready for you to find them. And, as for the sapphires and cameos, why I stole them, sold them, have got the money, and am going into business with it in Palmerston."

("The deuce you are," said George. "Is he mad? or is there something coming? I must have some brandy. I am frightened." He drank half a tumbler of brandy, and then went on with the letter.)

"If you ask me how, I will tell you. Lay down this letter a moment, take a table-knife, go outside of the pantry window (a latticed one, as you will remember), and raise the latch with the knife; that will explain a great deal to you. I resume.

"I came on to England, as you know, and we had

to beat up for Rio, leaky. From thence I wrote by the *Tay* steamer to my son Reuben, telling him to look out for me. That noble lad, sir, was as true as steel. He was living at the top of my cousin's house at Chelsea, and he took me in at every risk, and was most faithful and dutiful. Use that boy well, Sir George, and it shall be well with you.

"You know what I got involved in there. I began to see that there were some in that business far too clumsy for *me*, and I tried to get out of it. I thought of Stanlake. I had robbed the house once, and I meant to do it again. I knew what a terrible lot of property there was loose in that house. I began getting into that house through the pantry window; I got in, first and last, eight times.

"I knew enough to know that the black escritoire was my mark, and I worked at that. I found out your father's trick of sitting up, and dozing off un-easily, and it was the cause of much danger to me. I have been in the room with him several times when he was snoring and dozing in his chair, before I could get a chance at the lock, and then I failed the first time. The next night I came with other skeleton keys and got it open. That night I got the sapphires and the cameos, which I have seen your mother wear often, Sir George; and the next morning, Reuben

being safe at Stanlake, I wrote to the police, and laid them on to the crib at Church-place, Chelsea."

("Are there two devils," said George, aghast, "or is this the true and only one.")

"Sir, you may have thought that near three thousand pounds was enough to content me, but it was not. I wanted the diamonds; the whole affair (I will not use thieves' Latin to you, sir) was so safe, and there was such an absolute certainty of impunity about it, that I felt a kind of triumph, not unmixed with amusement. I came back after the diamonds; and the night I came back after the diamonds was the very night your poor dear pa died."

(George was so sick and faint now that the brandy had but little effect on him, but after a time he went on.)

"That night, sir, I got in as usual with my boots in my pocket. Old Simpson was fast asleep in a chair in the little drawing-room as usual. I waited a long while outside the library door, longer than usual, until I heard Sir George snore; and then, at the very first sound of it, I passed quickly and safely in.

"He was sleeping very uneasily that night, sometimes snoring, and sometimes talking. I heard him mention Mr. Erne's name very often, and once or twice, Mr. Erne's mother's name. Then he mentioned your name,

sir, and he said more than once, 'Poor George! Poor dear George!' to my great surprise, as you may suppose.

"Then I looked at the secretary, and it was open; and on the desk of it was lying a deed. I stepped up, and saw it was his will. I opened it, and read it, for it was very short. Eight thousand a year to Mr. Erne, and Stanlake to you. I had just heard him say, 'Poor dear George!' in his sleep; and I thought of you, sir—before God I did, unkind as you had been to me. I said, 'If I put this in my pocket, he must make a new one, and then it may be better for 'Poor dear George.' And, as I thought that, I heard a noise and looked up, and saw that he had silently awaked, had caught up a sword from the rack over the fire-place, and was close on me.

"He was very unsteady, and looked very ghastly, but he recognised me in an instant, and called me by name. I easily eluded him, and made swiftly for the door—he catching up the candle and following me down the passage, calling out in the most awful voice for Reuben to come and help him.

"I made for the kitchen, and he after me, quicker than I reckoned on. The kitchen was so dark that I got confused among the furniture, and began to get frightened, and think that I had gone too far in my rashness. Before I could clear out of it, he came reeling

in, and saw me again. He threw his sword at me, and fell heavily down, putting out the light.

"I was in the pantry, and at the window in one moment. As I got it open, I knocked down some glasses, and at the same moment heard Simpson in the kitchen shouting for help.

"I was deeply grieved on hearing next day that your poor pa was found dead. It is very dreadful to be took off like that in a moment of anger; called to your last account suddenly in an uncharitable frame of mind, without one moment given for repentance or prayer. I thank Heaven that I can lay my hand on my heart at this moment, and say that I am in peace and charity with all men, and can await my summons hence calmly and without anxiety. *My* spiritual affairs are in perfect order, Sir George. Oh, that you too would take warning before it is too late!

"And now, with regard to my worldly affairs, Sir George. I am sorry to trouble you, sir, but I must have those traps took off my trail immediate, if you please. You will, of course, lose no time about *that*, seeing that, should anything happen to me, of course Mr. Erne would immediately come into four-fifths of your income, with a claim for a year's rents. In short, Sir George, I have it in my power to ruin you utterly and irretrievably; and, when it came to my knowledge

last night that you, having heard of my return from France, had set the traps upon me, I got in such a fury that *I was half-way to Compton's office with it* before I could think what I was about. If it had been half-a-mile nearer, you would have been lost. You know what my temper is at times, and you must be very careful.

"This is all I have to trouble you with at present. I am not in want of any pecuniary assistance. My affairs are, on the whole, prosperous. I shall, by retaining possession of your father's will, render our interests identical. Meanwhile, sir, I thank you for your kindness to my son Reuben. You will never have a hard bargain to drive with me as long as you are kind to him."

CHAPTER XXI.

SIR GEORGE HILLYAR STARTS ON HIS ADVENTURE.

ONE scarcely likes to look too closely into the volcano of terror and fury which began to heave and gleam in Sir George Hillyar's mind when he read this. The biscuit-like walls of old craters stand up for centuries, heaving beautiful, scornful pinnacles aloft into the blue of heaven ; and the grass grows on the old flame-eaten, vitrified rocks, in the holes of which the native cats and copper lizards live and squabble, and say things behind one another's backs ; and people have picnics there ; and lost sheep feed there, and waken strange startling echoes in the dead silence of the summer noon by their solitary bleat ; and the eagle comes sometimes and throws his swift passing shadow across the short grass ; and all goes on peacefully, until folks notice that a white, round-topped cloud hangs high aloft over the hill, and stays there ; and then some one says that the cloud is red at night on the lower edge ; and then some

fine morning down slides the lip of the old crater, crash, in unutterable ruin, and away comes the great lava stream hissing through the vineyards, and hell is broken loose once more.

So now the bank of loose *scoriæ*—now, alas! a thing of the past—which had been built up by time, by want of temptation, by his love of his wife, by the company of such people as the Oxtons, by desire for the applause of society, round the seething fire which existed in George Hillyar, and which some say—and who is he bold enough to deny it?—is in all of us, had broken down utterly.

Suddenly, when at the height of prosperity, a prosperous gentleman, just winning his way into thorough recognition from the world, after all he had gone through; at this very moment he found his fortune and reputation in the hands of a thrice-convicted, self-accused, hypocritical villain. He knew that he was not safe for a moment; and he knew that, should this man use his power, he had only one remedy—suicide.

For, in the first place, he had thoroughly persuaded himself of the utter lowness of Erne's character—that he had no mercy to expect from him; and, should his father's will be produced, he would be awfully in Erne's debt even now. And next, he would sooner, far sooner, after what had passed, put a pistol to his head and

draw the trigger, than ask for it. Sir George Hillyar was a great scoundrel, but physically he was not a coward. Barker's Gap showed that to the astonished Secretary Oxton. He would still prefer death to what he chose to consider disgrace.

He had been using the wealth which he considered his very freely, with a view to reinstate himself into society, and had to a certain extent succeeded. Tasteful extravagance, which he had taken to as a means to that end, had now become a necessity to him; and, moreover, here, as in Australia, he had made many enemies by his manner. He could not and would not endure disgrace and ruin before these men. He placed the alternative of suicide most plainly before him.

The alternative! Then there was another? Yes, but one best not spoken about. A bird of the air would carry some matters.

At first he broke into most ungovernable, frantic rage, and broke his hand against the mantel-piece; but by degrees his passion grew more still and more intense, and his resolution, whatever it was, became fixed.

George Hillyar had not one friend in the world, unless you could call the old gamekeeper one. His love for his silly wife had long been on the wane, and was now utterly swept away and lost in this terrible deluge. Nay, Gerty had reason enough for jealousy, had she

looked in the right direction. He would have been utterly alone, on a terrible Stylites column of selfishness, built up, stone by stone, through a misspent life, had it not been for one single person. His heart was closed entirely towards every member of his species save one—his illegitimate son Reuben.

And so strangely had matters arranged themselves that this affection was shared by his bitterest enemy, the partner of his crimes. The one link between these two men, which did not seem of the devil's forging, was their kindly feeling towards this young man Reuben, whom each believed to be his son. And George's first resolution was to claim paternity in Reuben himself lest Reuben, believing Samuel Burton to be his father, should interfere in any way with his plans.

For George was right, as I dare say you have already guessed. Reuben *was* George's son. The poor woman, Samuel's wife, utterly deserted and alone in the world, lost her youngest child, and was left with Reuben only. And, when she saw Morton the keeper, she suspected that the family wanted to get him from her; and so she lied about it, and said it was the eldest who was dead. For this child was all she had left in the world; name, health, character, all were gone. Nothing was left but this pretty one; and, if she parted from that, there was nothing left but the river. She easily put simple old

Morton off his quest, and was left in peace. A selfish woman—to stand wilfully between her child and worldly advancement! And yet her conduct seems to shine out of the dreadful darkness of the whole transaction, on which I have so lightly touched, as a gleam from a higher and purer region.

Old Sir George Hillyar had seen the likeness in an instant, and had determined to *know nothing whatever*, but to do what he considered his duty by Reuben—which seems fully to account for his conduct to Reuben, and to George also ; for, when the kind old man (he was in his way *very* kind) saw, or thought he saw, that George had recognised his unfortunate offspring, and that his heart was moved towards him, then the old man's heart was softened, towards both father and son. He probably felt the same repugnance as I do to handle or examine a very ugly business.

Reuben, as soon as he had accepted Sir George Hillyar's protection, had been made under-keeper at Stanlake, and had been put under old Morton to learn his duties. Old Morton saw nothing strange in the attention that Sir George paid to this young man. Reuben was the favourite of the day, as he had been once. He admired Reuben, and rather flattered him. The old dog, if he is of a good breed, is quite contented with half the hearth-rug in his old age ; particularly when the young dog is so affec-

tionately deferential as was the young dog Reuben. Reuben would sometimes call him "old cock"—which was low; but then he submitted so gently to the old man's courtly reproofs; and, besides, his reckless and desperate gallantry in the matter of poachers more than out-balanced any slight lowness and slanginess of language of which Morton might have to complain. Morton took to Reuben, and Reuben took most heartily to his trade.

At this time also Reuben began to exhibit that fondness for decorating his person which afterwards caused him to develop into—what he is. So that the Reuben who stood before Sir George Hillyar in the library an hour or two after the arrival of that dreadful letter, was, so to speak, the very pink, tulip, or abstract ideal of all dandy gamekeepers, without being a bit overdressed or theatrical. A clean, dapper, good-humoured, innocent young fellow, with a pleasant open face which won your good will at once. He was strangely in contrast with his dark-browed father, and seemed an odd figure to find in that sink of guilt into which he was getting drawn.

"Reuben," said Sir George, quietly, "come here."

Reuben came up, and Sir George took his hand. "Look at me," he said. "Do I look as if I was mad?"

He certainly did not. Those steady, resolute eyes

shone out of no madman's head. Reuben, wondering, said emphatically, "No."

"Have I ever appeared mad in your eyes? Have I ever seemed to you to act on suddenly-formed resolutions—to pursue a very important course of action without due reason?"

Reuben, getting more puzzled yet, answered, "Certainly not, sir."

"Then should you think me a madman if I told you that I was your father?"

Reuben started and turned pale. He was utterly unprepared for this. His facile face assumed a look of painful anxiety, and he stood with half-opened mouth, waiting for Sir George to go on, evidently only half understanding what he had said already.

"Such is the case," he went on. "Do not ask me for the proofs, my poor boy, but believe me. Does not nature, does not your heart, tell you that I am right, as they both do me?"

Reuben looked at him one moment, and then said wondering, "Father! My father!"

Sir George mistook the tone in which Reuben spoke. He thought that Reuben spoke in affectionate recognition of his claims, whereas it was simply an ejaculation of wonder. It was the first time that any one had called him by the sacred old name, and he felt a strange

pleasure in it. Gerty's boy used to call him papa ; how sickly and artificial it sounded after "father!" He paused an instant, and then went on—

"Yes ; I am your father, Reuben. Remember that. Impress that on your mind. There is no possibility of a doubt of it. Keep that steadily before you through everything. I have been a bad father to you, but you must forgive and forget all that."

"I have never had anything but kindness from you, sir," said Reuben.

"You have had very little of it, my poor boy. Never mind ; there is time enough to mend all that. Now I have had, as you may suppose, a very distinct object in making this startling announcement to you this day above all others, for my conduct to you must show you that I have known the secret a long time."

Reuben assented, and began to look on his new-found father with more interest as his mind took in the facts of the case.

"Now," continued Sir George, "that treble-dyed, unmitigated villain, who used to pretend that you were his son—that Samuel Burton and I are at deadly variance, and I have made this announcement to you, in order that you may know which side you ought to take, should you unhappily be called on to choose, which God forbid. I have nothing more to say to you. Come to me here at

twelve o'clock to-morrow morning; for I am going a long and weary journey, and I want to say good-bye to you before I go."

"May not I go with you, sir?" said Reuben, in a low and husky voice. "I would be very faithful—"

"No, no!" said Sir George, somewhat wildly. "On any other journey but this, my boy. Stay at home, and keep watch over Lady Hillyar. I will write secretly to you, and you must do the same to me. Now go."

So the next day at noon, on George's return from Croydon, he found Reuben waiting for him; and he gave him a few instructions in the library, and bade him wait in the courtyard to see the last of him.

Meanwhile Gerty had sat still in her dressing-room, with the child on her bosom, in the same state of stupid horror into which she had fallen on reading the terrible letter—utterly unable to realize her position, or decide on any line of action. But now she rose up, for she heard George's foot on the stair, and heard his voice, his kindest voice, crying "Gerty! Gerty!" But she did not answer; and George, opening the door of the room, was surprised to see her standing there pale and wan, with the terror which yesterday had been on his face reflected on hers.

"Gerty, are you ill?"

"Yes, George ; I think I am ill. No, I am not ill. I am nervous. Nothing more."

"Gerty," said George, "I am going away."

"Yes, George."

"For a long time—a very long time."

"Yes, George. Am I to come?"

"No ; you must stay where you are."

"Very well. Are you going to Australia?"

"No ; to Paris first, and God only knows where afterwards."

"If you go to Vienna, I wish you would get me a set of buttons like Lady Bricbrack's. They are not very dear ; but no one else has got them, and I should like to annoy her."

"Very well," said George. "Good-bye."

She kissed him—a cold little kiss—and he was gone. "And she can part from me like *that*," said poor George, bitterly, little dreaming how much she knew.

But she went to the window, for she knew that she could see him ride across a certain piece of glade in the park a long distance off. She had often watched for him here. It reminded her of the first time she had ever seen him, at the Barkers'. They had made him out a long distance off by his careless, graceful seat, and had said, "That is Hillyar." So she had seen him the first

time four years before, when he had come riding to woo; so she saw him now for the last time for ever.

She saw the familiar old figure ride slowly across the open space in the distance and disappear; and she felt that she loved him still, and burst out wildly weeping and cried out vainly, "George! George! come back to me, darling! and I will love you all the same!" A vain, vain cry. He passed out of her sight, and was gone for ever.

CHAPTER XXII.

JAMES BURTON'S STORY : THE FORGE IS LIT UP ONCE
MORE.

I HAVE no doubt that I should have been very much astonished by everything I saw, when I first found solid ground under my feet, and looked round to take my first view of Australia. I was prepared for any amount of astonishment : I will go further, I was *determined* to be astonished. But it was no good. The very first thing I saw, on the wharf, was Mrs. Bill Avery, in a blue cloth habit, with a low-crowned hat and feather, riding a three-quarters bred horse, and accompanied by a new, but devoted husband, in breeches, butcher's boots, a white coat, and a cabbage-tree hat !

That cured me of wondering. I pointed her out to my mother, and she gave utterance to the remarkable expressions which I have described her as using, when I mentioned this wonderful *rencontre* almost at the beginning of my narrative : in addition to which, as I now

remember, she said that you might knock her down with a feather—which must be considered as a figure of speech, because I never saw a woman of any size or age stronger on her legs than my mother.

Yes, the sight of Mrs. Bill Avery, *that was* “a, cock-horse,” as Fred expressed it in his vigorous English, took all the wondering faculty out of me for a long time, or I should have wondered at many things; such as, why I should have begun thinking of a liberal and elegant caricature I had in my possession, of the Pope of Rome being fried in a frying-pan, and the Devil peppering him out of a pepper-box; but this was not very wonderful, considering that the thermometer stood 120° in the shade, that it was blowing half a gale from the northward, and that the flying dust was as big as peas.

I might have wondered why Mr. Secretary Oxtan, that great and awful personage, sat upon the shafts of an empty dray, just as you or I might have done; and why, since he was so very glad to see Messrs. Dawson, Pollifex, and Morton, he didn't get up and come forward to shake hands with them, but contented himself by bellowing out welcomes to them from a distance from under his white umbrella; and why those three gentlemen, the moment they had shaken hands with him, and with Erne the moment they were introduced to him, sat down instantly, as though it were a breach of etiquette to

stand on your feet. Why, once more, I felt exactly as though I had been doing a hard day's work on a hot day in August, whereas I had only stepped out of a boat, and given a hand, among ten more, to moving our things into a pile on the wharf. Why did I feel contented, and stupid, and idle, although the sand was filling my eyes and ears?

Moreover, although I am now accustomed to the effects of a northerly wind, I wonder to this day why I wasn't surprised at this.

There approached us rapidly along the wharf a very tall and very handsome lady, dressed most beautifully, who bore down on us, followed by two labouring men, whom I knew, in an instant, by their faces, to be Irishmen. This lady pointed out us and our baggage to the Irishmen, who immediately began taking it away piece by piece on a truck, without one single word, while the lady stood and looked at us complacently. We did not interfere. It was probably all right. It might be, or might not be; but, after Mrs. Bill Avery in a hat and feathers, on a high-stepping horse, the laws of right and wrong, hitherto supposed to be fixed and immutable principles, had become of more than questionable validity. Here, in this country, with this hot wind, it might be the duty of these Irishmen to steal our luggage, and we might be culpably neglecting ours by not aiding

and abetting them. If you think I am talking nonsense, try the utter bodily and moral prostration which is induced by a heat of 125° in the shade, and the spectacle of a convict driving by in a carriage and pair.

The lady stood and looked at Emma, my mother, and myself, sole guardians of the luggage, except the children and Martha, with infinite contentment. Once she turned to one of the Irishmen, and said, "Tim, ye'd best tell Mrs. Lanigan that she'd better hurry and get their tay ready for um," but then she resumed her gaze, and I noticed that Emma seemed to meet her views amazingly. At last she spoke.

"Your brother Joe would like to see the prorogun, maybe, my dear. I'll get him an order from James Oxton or some of 'em, if he's on shore in time. It's lucky I got Gerty's letter overland, or I'd not have expected you, and ye'd have had to go to the barx."

I soon understood the state of affairs. Lady Hillyar had written to the Lady before us, "Miss Burke;" and she had taken a house for us, and had taken as much pains to make everything comfortable for our reception as if we were her own relations. When Joe's abilities were appreciated, and the battle royal was fought, our intimate relations with the Irish party, to most of whom we were bound by ties of gratitude for many kindnesses—kindnesses we should never have received but for the

affectionate devotion of this good woman, towards the friends of all those whom she had ever loved—enabled both Joe and myself to take a political position which would otherwise have been impossible.

But we are still on the wharf. I waited until every chattel had been carried off by the Irishmen, and saw my mother, Emma, and the children carried off in triumph by Miss Burke, who insisted on leading Fred and carrying his horse (or rather what remained of it, for the head, and neck, tail, and one leg had been lost overboard at various times, and the stand and wheels were now used for a cart); and I prepared to wait in the dust and sun until my father, Joe, Trevettick, and Tom Williams should come ashore in the next boat. But the moment I was alone, Erne came and led me up to the empty wool-dray, on the shafts of which the leading Conservative talent of the colony had seated itself under umbrellas.

“Don’t tell me,” the Honourable Mr. Dawson was saying energetically, “I tell you, Oxton, that *this* is the stuff we want. *I* don’t hold with assisted emigration. Look at that lad before you, and talk to me of labour. *I* say, breed it. Take and breed your labour for yourself. That’s his sweetheart going along the wharf now with old Lesbia Burke, carrying a bundle of shawls and a umbrella. Take and breed your labour for yourself.”

This was reassuring and pleasant for a modest youth

of nineteen standing alone before four grand gentlemen. I was relieved to find that the discussion was so warm that I was only noticed by a kindly nod. Mr. Oxtan said, in a voice I now heard for the first time—a clear sharp voice, yet not wanting in what the singers call, I believe, “timbre” by any means :

“I tell you, Dawson, that I will not yield to this factious Irish cry. Every farthing of the land money which I can spare from public works shall go to the development of the resources of the colony by an artificial importation of labour. Dixi.”

“Very good,” said Dawson, “I did hope to find you more reasonable. Hang the resources of the colony ! Wool is the proper resource of the colony. I want skilled labour kep up and unskilled labour kep down. A nice thing for the squatters if mines were found here—and mines there are, as sure as you’re born. Why, I tell you—for we’re all squatters here together—that I’ve got a piece of copper under my bed—down south—I won’t mention names—as big as a quart bottle. If that was to get wind among any Cornish roughs, you’d have shepherd’s wages up to fifty pounds in a year. I don’t want development ; I want—”

“What suits your pocket, old fellow,” said Mr. Oxtan, laughing. “Man, I made this colony, and I’ll stick by it. These clever Irishmen are merely raising

this cry for high-priced labour and cheap land to get me out, and themselves and their friends in. I *will not* interfere in the price of labour by legislation—”

“Right toorul loorul,” sang the light-hearted Mr. Morton, speaking for the first time; “and so my sweet brother-in-law spends the capital of the colony by flooding the labour-market with all the uncriminal offscourings of Old England. I thank heaven *I* never laid claims to consistency.”

“Jack, you’re a fool,” said Mr. Oxton. “Capital invested in importing labour pays a higher interest than that invested in any other way, even if one leaves out the question of human happiness—”

“Oh!” said the Honourable Mr. Dawson, “if you’re drove to human happiness, you’d best make a coalition of it with Phelim O’Ryan, and have done. I’m not a-going to rat. I’ll stick by you faithful, James Oxton. But I did *not* expect to have my stomach turned with *that*.”

“Well,” said the Secretary, “there’s one more session ended, and I am not out yet. Come, it is full time to get towards the house. Is this the young man that Lady Hillyar speaks of, Mr. Hillyar?”

“Oh dear no,” said Erne; “this is my friend Jim. It is his brother Joe she means.”

"Then perhaps you will take charge of this for your brother, Burton. If you are in by half-past four it will do. Good morning."

And so the four statesmen rose by degrees, and walked away very slowly, under their umbrellas along the wharf; never one of them venturing to make a remark without stopping and leaning against the wall for support. If it became necessary to reply, the other three would also at once support themselves against the wall until the argument was finished. After which they would go slowly forward again.

I found that the paper I held in my hand, was an order for two persons to be admitted into the Gallery of the House of Assembly, to witness the ceremony which Miss Burke had called the "prorogun." It appeared, as Erne afterwards told me, that that most good-natured little lady, Lady Hillyar, had written to Mr. Oxton about Joe especially, telling him of his fancy for political life, and his disappointment owing to Sir George Hillyar's sudden death. She begged her dear James to make them elect him into the Assembly immediately, as he was as much fit to be there as that dear, kind old stupid Dawson (by whom she meant my friend, the Hon. Mr. D.) was to be in the Council. Mr. Oxton could not quite do all she asked; but, for his dear Gerty's sake, he did all he could at present—

gave Joe and myself a ticket for the prorogation of the Houses.

The instant that the rest of our party got on shore with the remainder of our things, I pounced on Joe, and showed him the order. The weary, patient look which had been in his face ever since his disappointment—and which, I had seen with regret, had only deepened through the confinement and inertness of the voyage—gave way at once to a brighter and more eager look, as I explained to him what kind Mr. Oxton had done for him.

“Jim,” he said, taking my arm, “I like this as well as if any one had given me ten pounds. I want to see these colonial parliaments at work. I would sooner it had been a debate; but I can see the class of men they have got, at all events. Let us come on at once, and get a good place.”

So we packed off together along the wharf; and I, not being so profoundly impressed with anticipation of the majestic spectacle of representative government which we were about to witness as was Joe, had time to look about me and observe. And I could observe the better, because the fierce hot north wind, which all the morning had made the town like a dusty brick-field, had given place to an icy blast from the south, off the sea, which made one shiver again, but which was not

strong enough to move the heaps of dust which lay piled, like yellow snow-wreaths at each street corner, ready for another devil's dance, to begin punctually at nine the next morning.

The town was of magnificent proportions, as any one who has been at Palmerston within the last six years will readily allow ; but, at the time I am speaking of, the houses did not happen (with trifling exceptions) to be built. Nevertheless, the streets were wide and commodious, calculated for an immense amount of traffic, had the stumps of the old gum-trees been moved, which they weren't.

There was a row of fine warehouses, built solidly with freestone, along the wharf ; but, after one got back from the wharf, up the gentle rise on which the town stands, Palmerston might at that time be pronounced a patchy metropolis. At every street corner there was a handsome building ; but there were long gaps between each one and the next, occupied by half-acre lots, on which stood tenements of wood, galvanized iron, and tin, at all possible distances and at all possible angles from the main thoroughfare. As an instance ; on the half-acre lot next to the branch Bank of New South Wales, a handsome Doric building, the proprietor had erected a slab hut, bark roofed, lying at an angle of say 35° to the street. At the further end of this, and

connected with it, was a dirty old tent, standing at an angle of 35° to the slab hut. In the corner formed by these two buildings was a big dog, who lived in a tin packing case, and mortified himself by bringing blood against the sharp edges of it every time he went in and out; and who now, after the manner of the Easterns, had gone up on to the flat roof of his house in the cool of the evening, and was surveying the world. All the place was strewed with sheep-skins; and in front of all, close to the road, was an umbrella-tent, lined with green baize, in which sat the proprietor's wife, with her shoes off, casting up accounts in an old vellum book. From the general look of the place, I concluded that its owner was a fell-monger, and habitually addicted to the use of strong waters. Being thrown against him in the way of business a short time after, I was delighted to find that I was right in both particulars.

I don't know that this was the queerest establishment which I noticed that day. I think not; but I give it as a specimen, because the Bank of New South Wales stands near the top of the hill; and, when you top that hill, you are among the noble group of Government buildings, and from among them you look down over the police paddock on to the Sturt river again, which has made a sudden bend and come round to

your feet. You see Government House, nobly situated on the opposite hill, and below you observe "The Bend," Hon. J. Oxtan's place, and many other buildings. But, more than all, looking westward, you see Australia—Australia as it is, strange to say, from Cape Otway to Port Essington, more or less—endless rolling wolds of yellow grass, alternated with long, dark, melancholy bands of colourless forest.

"Joe!" I said, catching his arm, "Joe! look at that."

"At what?"

"Why, at *that*. That's *it*."

"That's what? old man," said Joe.

"Why, *it*. The country. Australey. Lord A'mighty, aint it awful to look at?"

"Only plains and woods, Jim," said Joe wondering. "It is not beautiful, and I don't see anything awful in it."

"But it's so lonely," I urged. "Does any one ever go out yonder, over those plains? Does any one live over there?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Joe, carelessly. "Oh yes, and miles beyond that. Come, let us get our places."

The House of Assembly—the Commons of the Colony—was the prettiest among all the pretty group of Government buildings, and most commodiously

arranged inside also, with an excellent gallery. As soon as we were seated, having about half an hour to wait, I began thinking of that desolate, wild-looking landscape I had just seen—thinking, by what wonderful accident it came about that all the crime of the old country should have been sent for so many years to run riot in such a country as *that*. I could understand now, how any mind, brooding too long in solitude miles away from company, among dark forests or still more dreary plains, like those, might madden itself; and also began to understand how the convict mind under those circumstances sometimes burst forth with sudden volcanic fury, and devoured everything. “Fancy a man,” I said to myself, “taking the knowledge of some intolerable wrong into those woods with him, to nurse it until——” And I began to see what had led my thoughts this way almost unconsciously, for beside me was sitting the man I had seen with Mrs. Avery.

I confess that I felt a most eager curiosity to know something about this man. He was a good-looking fellow, about thirty or thereabout, with a very brown complexion, very bold eyes, and a somewhat reckless look about him. Now and afterwards I found out that he was a native of the colony, a very great stockrider, and was principal overseer to Mr. Charles Morton.

He was easily accessible, for he began the conversation. He talked for a considerable time, and of course he began to talk about horses. This was what I wanted. I said, I thought I saw him riding that morning on the wharf. He fell into my trap, and said Yes, he had been riding there with his wife.

I was very much shocked indeed ; but I had not much time to think about it, for two ushers, coming in, announced his Excellency and the members of the Council. And enter his Excellency at the upper end of the room, resplendent in full uniform, accompanied by the commandant of the forces, and Mr. Midshipman Tacks—which latter young gentleman had, I regret to say, mischievously lent himself to an intrigue of the Opposition, and smuggled himself in at his Excellency's coat-tails, to spoil the effect. Close behind the Governor, however, came no less than sixteen of the members of the Council, headed by Mr. Secretary Oxtan. And a nobler-looking set of fellows I have seldom seen together. My friend, the Hon. Mr. Dawson, was not quite so much at his ease as I could have wished him to be. He turned round whenever he coughed, and did it humbly behind his hand. He also opened the ceremony by dropping his hat—a tall, white, hairy one, like a Frenchman's—which made a hollow sound when it dropped, and rolled off the dais

into the body of the hall, and was politely restored to him by the leader of the Opposition.

The members of the Assembly rose as the Governor and the Council came in. The Government members were below me ; so I could not see them ; but I had a good look at the Opposition, who were directly in front of me. The man who sat nearest the Speaker's chair was evidently the leader—the terrible Mr. Phelim O’Ryan, James Oxtan’s bitter enemy, of whom we had heard so much on the voyage. I was prepared to hate this unprincipled demagogue, and probably should have done so—if I hadn’t looked at him. No man could look at Phely O’Ryan, that noble, handsome, Galway giant, and not begin to like him ; and if he got ten minutes’ talk with you—there. That is what makes the villain so dangerous.

Phelim O’Ryan is talented, well-read, brave, witty, eloquent, and also one of the kindest and most generous of men. But—well, I wish sometimes he would tell you what he was going to do beforehand. It might be convenient. Lad as I was, when I looked at him that day, I still had some dim consciousness that that handsome gentleman was capable of saying a little more than he meant. But I did not look at him long ; for my eyes were suddenly riveted on the man who stood next, partly behind him, and, as I looked, whis-

pered in his ear. A pale man, with a vastly tall narrow forehead, great, eager eyes, and a gentle sweet face—a face which would have won one at once, had it not been for a turn or twitch at the corner of his mouth, suggestive of vanity. A most singular-looking man, though you could hardly say why; for the simple reason that his singularity was caused by a combination of circumstances, possibly assisted by slight affectation in dress. I had just concentrated my attention on him, when Joe, who had been talking to his neighbour, caught my arm and said,

“Jim, do you see the man who is whispering to O’Ryan?”

I said, “I’m looking at him.”

“Do you know who he is?”

“I want to, most particular,” I answered, “for a queerer card I never saw turned.”

“Man!” said Joe, squeezing my arm, “that’s Dempsey. Dempsey, the great Irish rebel.”

I said, “O, ho!” and had no eyes for any one else after this, but sat staring at the rebel with eager curiosity, or I might have wasted a glance on the man who stood next him—Dr. Toogood, a big man of portly presence, about sixty, with a large red face, carefully shaved, and an immense powerful jaw; whose long white hair fell back over his coat collar. A man with

a broad-brimmed hat, worn at the back of his head, loose black quaker-like clothes, a wisp of a white tie round his neck with no collar, a Gampine umbrella, and big shoes. He is clever, honest, and wonderfully well-informed ; but, what with always having a dozen irons in the fire at once, and being totally unable to keep a civil tongue in his head towards his scientific and political opponents, the dear Doctor has hitherto only succeeded in making a more or less considerable mess of it.

His Excellency congratulated both branches of the Legislature on the material and moral progress of the colony, which, if not so great as in some years, yet was still considerably in advance of others. Exports had slightly fallen off ; but then, on the other hand, imports had slightly increased, principally in articles of luxury ; and he need not remind them that a demand for such articles was a sure sign of general prosperity (to which Joe said, "O Lord!"). In consequence of the even balance of parties, the present Government had only carried through seven bills out of eleven, and although he would be the last man in the world to accuse the present Opposition of anything approaching to faction, yet still he saw with deep regret the rejection of such an exceedingly useful public measure as the Slaughter-house Act. However, the present Government had not chosen

to make it a party question, and so he had nothing more to say. Crime had diminished, but, on the other hand, the public health had slightly deteriorated. He thanked them for their patient attention to their duties ; and then he put on his cocked hat, and there was peace in Israel for six months.

I thought the speech rather too trivial for her Majesty's representative to deliver to what was really a most noble and impressive assembly, charged with the destinies of an infant nation. But Sir Richard Bostock knew what he was about, and so did the colony. Government had suffered several defeats in questions of public utility, which showed that the Opposition were factious and determined ; and so they were nervous. But, on the other hand, Ministers had carried their seven best measures through, and so the Opposition were anxious also. The rejection of one more Government bill would probably have forced James Oxtou to appeal to the country ; in which case the Opposition, officered almost entirely by Irishmen, and working the elections with a vigour and unanimity which the other two nations never equal, would most likely have gained seats enough to bring in their great measure from the Ministerial benches, with some hopes of its being carried. Both parties were therefore watching one another like two fierce dogs eager to be at one

another's throats. Hence the ridiculously cautious speech of the Governor.

And what was this wonderful measure which the Radicals had determined to bring in at the first moment that there was the very slenderest hope of a majority? It was simply revolutionary, and involved interests absolutely gigantic. I will explain it very shortly. The area of the colony was 460,000 square miles, of which area 124,000 square miles were occupied by that singular aristocracy called squatters, men who rent vast tracts of land from Government for the depasturing of their flocks, at an almost nominal sum, subject to a tax of so much a head on their sheep and cattle. The Radicals proposed to throw the whole of the land open for selection on the American principle, at, if possible, five shillings an acre. Should they succeed in this, they would instantly follow by a Forty-acre Qualification Bill; and, were one single House to be elected on those principles, every one knew that manhood suffrage would follow in a year. It was really a great and noble question; and no one who looked and saw such giants as Oxton and Pollifex on the one side, and as O'Ryan, Dempsey, and Toogood on the other, could for a moment doubt that it would be a splendid and heroic quarrel right bravely fought out.

So thought I, as Joe and I walked along the street

together—he dragging his vast misshapen bulk along with sudden impatient jerks, gesticulating with his long arms and tossing his beautiful head up now and then as though he himself were in the forefront of the battle, as indeed he was in his imagination. And, when he turned round on me, and I saw that his face was flushed, and that his eyes were gleaming, and his close-set, Castlereagh mouth twitching with excitement, I said to myself, “There is a man fit to fight among the foremost of them, if they only knew.”

Such were the people among whom, and the atmosphere in which, we strangely found ourselves. Though strange at first, it soon became quite familiar ; and it is now without the slightest astonishment that I find our humble story, like the story of the life of every one in a very small community with liberal institutions, getting to some slight extent mixed up with the course of colonial politics.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN WHICH TWO BAD PENNIES COME BACK.

WE stayed in the lodging which Miss Burke had so kindly found for us, in the Irish quarter of Palmerston, for a considerable time. We might have had quieter neighbours, I will allow ; but it is impossible that we could have had kinder. We were free of the quarter—nay more, under the protection of the quarter. No one ever offered to fight us ; and as for the noise, why I have heard noise enough in Lawrence-street, Chelsea, at times. We were quite used to that sort of thing, and got on most comfortably.

In some mysterious way our affairs seemed prospering, for I noticed that my father's calm, square face, so dear to me, so closely watched by me, grew brighter every day. The frequent interviews with the Hon. Mr. Dawson seemed to afford him great satisfaction. At last he came home one night, and said that we should have to prepare ourselves to go over yonder in a few

months. On its being clamorously demanded of him where that was, he merely replied, "Why, over yonder," and pointed to the right of the fire-place, in the direction, as I afterwards ascertained, of the South Pole.

My father was a great deal with Mr. Dawson now, and I and the rest of us guessed that Mr. Dawson was putting him in the way of some business. Tom Williams had got leave from my father to go to work with Trevittick at a forge in the town. I could have gone too, for I was fearful of getting behind in my work, and, though I was very fond of Tom Williams, yet I should hardly have liked to have him pass me ; but Mr. Dawson would not allow me to go to work. He negatived the proposition flatly, and got my father to back him, by some gross misrepresentation or another.

I have said that my father was a great deal with the Hon. Mr. Dawson, but I think I ought to say that I was a great deal more with him. Every night, or nearly every night, as soon as it was dark, Mr. Dawson would come to our house and ask for me, and then he and I would go out alone together, up and down the most secluded outskirts of the city hour after hour. And, after a few of these walks in the dark, under the Southern Cross, among the whispering trees in the domain, by the still silent reaches of the river, or beside the rushing surf of the moonlit bay ; I began to see a

very great and noble soul, trying, through the fetters of ignorance and diffidence, to unfold itself before me. In these midnight walks, I heard, bit by bit, clumsily told, yet faithfully, the history of a man who had done good when he had had every temptation to do evil; who had consistently and pertinaciously followed the right—more, it somehow seemed to me, by some blind instinct, than by any intellectual conviction.

He had recognised my father's great worth at once, and had treated him as an equal and a friend. But with my father he never made any allusion to his origin. He was nearly as jealous of his position with him as he was with Pollifex or Morton. In me the good man seemed to see his own youth reproduced, and he opened his heart to me. I was at that time just what he had been thirty years before—a young blacksmith apprentice. His confidences with me were little more than soliloquies at first. He had lived in and for himself all his life, and in me he saw the old self of his youth revived. And his great heart, unspoilt after so many fierce struggles with a world which had never had a chance of understanding him, began to unfold itself before the light of my youth.

"Old chap," he said to me one night, among the silent, aromatic trees, "I've been fighting your battle for you."

"Yes, sir?" I answered.

"Ay. But I haven't altogether won it. I was trying to persuade your father to let you marry at once, whereas I have only beat him down to six months, or, to be correct, to five months and eight days. At the end of that time, old fellow, you're to have your indentures give you, and to marry Martha; which is so far satisfactory, as Pollifex said when he had shot three of the bushrangers and the kangaroo-hounds had bailed the fourth one up in the verandy."

I was in such a flutter of happiness at this most unexpected news—for we had *hoped* for three years—that, in trying to say something pretty to him, I found that I was nearly reduced to the old formula of "thank you." I think I decorated it a little; for my kind, good friend, who deserved the title of Honourable if ever a man did, laid his hand on my shoulder, and changed the subject for a time.

"Now, old fellow, it being dark, and Pollifex and Morton not looking out for us (and that is the reason I don't walk with you in the daylight), I'll just speak to you as one smith may to another. What am I to do about Trevittick?"

"About Trevittick, sir?"

"Ah! about Trevittick. I've put your father in the way of making his fortune in the trade. He is grateful

enough about the matter ; for your father is a true gentleman, Jim, mind that, but he is firm on that point."

I had to explain that I knew nothing.

"Why, I have laid your father on to this job. The township at Port Romilly is just surveyed, and your father is going to set up his forge there. Port Romilly, which lies just under Cape Wilberforce, will be a great place, and your father will make his fortune. Lord bless you, I'll give six hundred a year for your father in six months. And your father says to me, as firm as a rock, 'If I ever get the chance, Mr. Dawson, I'll repay your kindness sevenfold ; but with regard to Trevittick, sir, that man stuck to me most noble when the whole world pretty nigh had left me, and I have took Trevittick into partnership ; and in partnership he stays, sir, unless by his own act.'"

"But," I said, "my dear sir, I think Trevittick is very honest."

"Confound him, yes ; that's the very worst of it. That's the very mischief, don't you see. That's just what makes one long to bang his curly head against that there wall. Two days ago, I laid that man on to a capital thing in the North ; but no. Says he to me, as bold as brass, 'Sir, I thank you kindly ; but the company of those Burtons has become necessary to

me.' That's just the words he said to me, as cool as you like."

"He'll make a good partner to my father, sir," I ventured to urge.

"Maybe," said my honourable friend; "but I don't want him down South. Who is that Tom Williams? He seems very thick with him. If I could get that lad away, I expect Trevittick would follow."

"I daresay he would," I said; "but Tom, bless you! would be lost away from us. *He* won't go. My father took him from the parish."

"Eh?" said Mr. Dawson, with new interest.

"From the parish workhouse. Tooting, you know. Hadn't got any father and mother, as far as could be ascertained. At least, not worth speaking of. After father got hold of him, he grew six inches and increased one stone six in weight in the first year. Father used to have him put opposite to him, to see him eat his victuals. That boy never had a kind word before he came to us; and since he has come to us, he has never had a cross one. He won't go, sir."

"Ought to be hung if he did," said Mr. Dawson. "A parish boy, eh? I say, old fellow, can you keep a secret?"

"I hope so."

"Why, then, *I'm* a parish boy," he said. "I who

stand here, by God's mercy, a rich and honourable gentleman, was brought up in the workhouse of St. Nicholas Without, and, if that aint the strangest thing ever you heard on, I should be glad to know it."

After a pause he went on: "We weren't farmed out like you was—I mean like Tom Williams was—and they were kind to us in the main. Yes, I think they were kind to me in the main. After forty years, Jim, I don't bear any malice to any one in that workhouse. When I left that house to be bound, I left it with a glad heart; and I turned round and shook my fist at the walls, and was going to curse it, and all the officers in it, save one; but I couldn't do it. All of a sudden the thought came over me that it had been my home for fourteen years, hideous and wretched as it was, and I burst out crying. After a year or so, my heart was softened, Jim, and I felt as if I must go back and see the officers, more particularly one I thought had always used me cruel. 'For,' I said, 'it's no doubt owing to his beating on me morning, noon, and night, with whatever came handy, that makes me so steady and industrious now.' He used to say there was Scripture for it. And I went back to shake hands with him. And he was dead. And I couldn't ask his pardon. And that's been a caution to me about bearing malice ever since."

When I thought of the tender mercies of Tooting, I

guessed how much this good man had to forgive, and was silent.

"But the master," he continued, in a brisker tone, "The master. There was a kind man for you. That man never gave me one hard word in fourteen year."

"Couldn't he have stopped old Hopkins from beating you, sir?"

"Lord bless you, he never know'd nothing of that. I never was a sneak. I'd have had my flesh cut to pieces before I'd have sneaked. And, when I was bound, the master he shook hands with me, and he says, 'You've been a good steady lad, Dawson.' And he gave me a shilling; and I bought a handkercher with it, which I've got now. And, when I die, Jim Burton, you take and put that handkercher into my coffin; or the money will do you no good."

We parted here, and I went homeward, thinking how it was that this man had not been thrashed into a savage and a criminal, and wondering whether some people were born so good that you couldn't spoil them; wondering also whether that calm gentle eye, that quiet face, and that complacent expression of strength in the whole figure, were cause or effect; and while thinking about it I got home, and found that there was company to supper.

Only one. A lady. Mrs. Quickly.

There she was, sitting opposite my mother, exactly the same as ever. As faultlessly clean and neat, with the same exquisite waxen-pale complexion, the same beautifully-parted chestnut hair, scarce sprinkled with grey ; the same dark silk gown, fitting so perfectly to her neat slim figure ; the same beautiful thin hands folded in her lap before her ; the same snow-white handkerchief, neatly folded over her bosom ; altogether the same ideal of spotless cleanliness and purity ; slightly overdone perhaps, but still beautiful to look on, as of yore ; with the very same prurient little devil sitting in the corner of her eye. Mrs. Quickly was there, not changed one bit.

Not even in her cap, which you will notice that I have not as yet mentioned. The fact is that, although Mrs. Quickly was the very pink of prudish neatness in every point, yet still the good woman could not restrain herself in the matter of caps. I have no doubt she would have done it if she could, but the old Adam was too strong in her. She had on a cap like a prizefighting publican's barmaid, which gave her very much the appearance of having broken out into blossom like an amaryllis ; a plant of more than nun-like quietness of stalk and foliage, surmounted by a gaudy crimson-and-white blossom.

When Mrs. Quickly applied for the post of under-

matron to Mrs. Broodhen, at Sydney, that experienced matron gave one look at her cap, and another at her eye, and ordered her out of the room. She forbade her to come near the place, and at last made Sydney too hot to hold her. Mrs. Quickly threatened to go to her lawyer, but didn't. There is no doubt that Mrs. Quickly, as she can prove to you any day, was shamefully used ; but then Mrs. Broodhen was a woman of great sagacity and experience, and as a general rule knew immensely well what she was about, as many a poor friendless girl will testify with blessings. I traced the calumny of Mrs. Quickly's having been a nobleman's mistress, and of her having been so outrageously extravagant in dress as to half ruin Lord Holloway and oblige him to live abroad, to Tom Williams, and through him to that excellent, though indiscreet, busy-body, his present wife, formerly Miss Polly Agar, of this story. Really, even now, I do not know what to say about Mrs. Quickly. I am in a minority, but I can only say that when all was over and done, she made her story good to me. My wife says that she would do so to any man who was fool enough to listen to her.

But still, when I saw that woman sitting there, I felt a cold chill. When I thought of Mrs. Clayton (whilom Mrs. Bill Avery), and Mrs. Quickly living in the same town, I saw that at any moment an explosion might

take place, which might bring infinite misery on the head of the innocent Clayton, and others. But then I said to myself that they could not involve us in it, further than as spectators. The Hillyars and the Burtons lived in an atmosphere of their own, an atmosphere of innocent purity, and could not be involved in the troubles of such people as these. Alas !

"No," I repeated to myself next morning, "the innocent won't suffer for the guilty. My father kept the peace between her and, her husband in Brown's-row sometimes, and, if anything leaks out, I hope he'll be handy to do it again. But we are safe ; our course lies smooth and clear before us."

But, when I came round the corner sharp, the very next minute, on our worthy cousin Samuel Burton, sitting on a flour-barrel under a large umbrella, smoking a Manilla cheroot, in the real Australian way, with the big end in his mouth : then I was not quite so sure that it did.

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